



MUT

MANGOSUTHU
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY



9TH FOCUS CONFERENCE

**Re-inventing higher education:
insights, trends and lessons learnt from COVID-19**



BOOK OF ABSTRACTS | 2022

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Editorial note

These are the original abstracts submitted to the 2022 edition of the Focus Conference. Please note that the final versions of abstracts and accepted full papers will be published in the conference Proceedings. The proceedings will be published by Atlantic Press (a part of Springer Nature) in the “Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research” Series. All papers will be available online in Open Access.

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Communications



Welcome to the 2022 Focus on Higher Education Conference

Dear delegates

Welcome to the 9th Focus Conference hosted eThekweni. The Conference is organized and hosted by the Teaching and Learning Development Centre (TLDC) at Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT). As always, we host our delegates with warmth and humility that is characteristic of our forever warm city of Durban.

The 2022 edition of the conference promises to yet again be robust, intellectually invigorating, and insightful. The Organising Committee specifically coined the theme, Re-inventing higher education: Insights, Trends and Lessons Learnt from Covid-19, specifically for the conference delegates to reflect on and address the matters related to the impact of COVID-19 on different aspects of teaching, learning, and higher education in general. The conference gathers academics, scholars, and practitioners in the higher education sector to share their research and express their perspectives on the reinvention of higher education.

We are delighted to announce that the proceedings of the 9th Focus Conference will be published in Atlantis Press, which is part of Springer Nature, in the "Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research" Series. Normal double peer review processes will be followed, and all papers will be available online in Open Access.

We strive for continuous improvement and enhancing delegate experiences at our conference. Based on the feedback from 2021, for the 2022 edition we have increased presentation time from 20 minutes to 30 minutes. This will ensure that presenters have ample time to engage with the audience critically and robustly.

As usual, we shall host you in style. We hope that you will enjoy the conference.

Best wishes.
Organising Committee

General Information

Language

The official Conference language is 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

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Univen: University of Venda

UL: University of Limpopo

Unisa: University of South Africa

ABSTRACTS

RE-INVENTING HIGHER EDUCATION: INSIGHTS, TRENDS AND LESSONS LEARNT FROM COVID-19.

These are the original abstracts submitted by the authors to the 2022 edition of the Focus Conference. Please note that the final versions of abstracts and accepted full papers will be published in the conference Proceedings.

SUB-THEME 1: TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHING PEDAGOGIES.

The Forgotten Voices During COVID-19? Exploring Student's Experiences of Online Learning in the Midst the COVID-19 Pandemic in South African Universities.

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Abstract

COVID-19 has become our new reality and our new normal in educational contexts and we therefore cannot ignore the COVID-19 pandemic in our epistemological access to quality education from a humanist and from a transformative perspective. The COVID-19 pandemic as a new reality has created a new social order of remote online learning in South African Universities (SAU). Many universities see students as depositories of knowledge and as result still continue with the traditional way of doing things where they offer the curriculum, as an aprior, as already given and cannot be altered with students' experiences. In consequence of this, the spirit of curriculum design is not as democratic, inclusive and socially just as it should be as students' inputs are valued at later stages and only come in after module evaluations. I therefore nurse and treat this gap in this study by exploring, reflecting and focusing on student's experiences of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in a South African University. The study was of a qualitative approach hence I conducted eighteen semi-structured interviews and nine focus group discussions to generate data for the case under study. I purposively recruited eighteen students to participate in the study. The findings of this study indicated that students were eager to be share their experiences of online learning. In the interview sessions a majority of the students shared acceptance of online learning because it has some positive outcomes. The students shared that they are able to shape and direct their own learning and they emphasized that it assisted them in saving for accommodation expanses as they learn from home. During the discussions in the focus group students largely and collectively revealed that online learning has not been smooth with the challenges of poor internet service and anxiety to navigate and explore this new way of learning. Students emphasised the importance of being inducted and trained how to use online learning platforms in their university courses so that they can be able to efficiently and effectively use them. Students views on online learning are hence crucial since they evidently have valuable contributions to make.

Keywords: Student, Transformation, Decolonial, University, Teaching, Learning, Curriculum.

An Afrocentric Scrutiny of the Changing Environment in South Africa's Higher Education Institutions due to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Special Reference from Historically Black Universities (HBUS).

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Abstract

The recent yet unanticipated Corona Virus (Covid-19) pandemic first witnessed in Wuhan, China has made its destructive presence felt around the world. From a schooling perspective and especially from a Higher Education Institution (HEI) standpoint, the pandemic has revealed dire institutional gaps at South African universities, particularly those possessing limited technology, infrastructure, human resources, transformation, and finance. The sudden shift from face-to-face to multi-modal learning exposed the limited capacity Historically Black Universities (HBUs) have to deal with such sudden paradigm shifts given their state of development and unreadiness. A skim reading of an array of the literature, in addition to policy briefs, revealed limited engagement(s) regarding the nexus of COVID-19 and its repercussions on South Africa's HEIs, particularly HBUs. In consideration of the above, and employing a qualitative research approach, this article aims to delve into the challenges faced by HBUs in South Africa while also offering pivotal long-term blueprints that may be brought to the fore by the government, especially the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), for not only current inequality gaps but future unforeseen circumstances.

Corporate Governance and Entrepreneurship Education in Response to Gender-Based Violence Challenge: Prospects for South African Higher Education Institutions.

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Abstract

Gender-based violence (GBV) is another pandemic in South Africa that became prevalent during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. Highlighting some of the anxiety issues include future uncertainty, loss of income, spending time indoors doing nothing, and loss of loved ones. Loss of income threatens the livelihood and self-worth of South African Higher Education Institutions (HEI) students since the ability to provide earns a certain level of respect from family and communities. Students in HEI went back home and subsequently lost government funding for accommodation and stipends. Secondly, several universities do not offer an entrepreneurship education that empowers students even in the mid of GBV experiences. This paper explores the impact of corporate governance in the implementation of entrepreneurship education in HEI. A qualitative thematic literature review methodology is more useful to assess how HEI steers the management practices to achieve its stakeholder's interests. The findings suggest that financial distress is one of the key factors associated with GBV victims as it perpetuates vulnerability. In addition, the lack of enabling environment such as standards and procedures that addresses a transdisciplinary curriculum is a major concern. Therefore, this paper proposed a remedial action that provides practical knowledge and entrepreneurship skills that will be aligned with the health, welfare, and external stakeholders of students in HEI. Secondly, entrepreneurship education must be delivered in a participatory teaching approach with a business plan, pitching a concept, and a sustainable multi-dimensional business model as learning outcomes. An implication of these findings in both corporate governance and the introduction of entrepreneurship education must be taken into account. Moreover, this will create an entrepreneurial ecosystem with enabling policies and easy access to programs such as GBV in HEI.

Keywords: Corporate governance, Entrepreneurship education, Empowerment, Gender-based violence, Covid-19, Curriculum transformation.

Lecturer-Driven Changes to Curriculum Design for First-Year Biology Undergraduates to Enable Academic Support by Creating Emotional trust Online.

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Abstract

During the lockdown, while curriculum delivery received priority in 'saving' the academic year within higher education, and much effort went into moving content online, little has been offered in literature to understand how lecturers can connect with students emotionally within the virtual space. This study shows how the digital space can be used to establish a line of communication between the lecturer and students, and how, when resulting trust is nurtured, this allows a space for students to express any vulnerabilities, in the emotional and academic sense. Nodding's Pedagogy of Care is used as the framework to explore this strategy within a first-year class. Activities designed by the lecturer were provided weekly, online, over six weeks in 2021 for a class of 522 first-year biology students. Students voluntarily responded and the lecturer provided follow-up to connect with students in a social space and provide support for their cognitive development. Students submitted 1,808 responses over the 6-week period. It was found that when lecturers create a space for belonging, students are more open to the communication of their cognitive needs. This study recognises that the teaching space should be seen as a place to facilitate and nurture learning development rather than a space to try to catch up on the curriculum based on omissions that may have occurred in previous schooling years. Connecting with the students emotionally and socially can enable them to engage with concerns around their cognitive development and challenges. The strategies investigated in this study can be applied to the current online learning context during the pandemic and lockdown, and may also be applied as part of the blended learning approaches for large classes.

A Systems Approach to Academic Leadership: In Pursuit of Excellence in Teaching and Learning.

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Abstract

Academic leadership is a complicated and understudied concept in higher education (Dumulescu and Mutiu ,2021). The COVID-19 pandemic, ironically, has served as a stark reminder that large-scale, unpredictable catastrophes always necessitate significant leadership methods. This is the kind of leadership that arose because of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, which drove higher education institutions to reimagine practices and adopt flexible systems to help adjust to the new normal. Consequently, the purpose of this paper was to investigate how academic leaders from a South African university navigated the COVID-19 crisis, especially during its initial stages. To understand the lessons learned from the entire experience. The study used a thematic analysis descriptive qualitative approach with data collected from six (6) academic leaders, from a South African University, in the Eastern Cape. In-depth interviews were used in the study, as such, a narrative of verbatim accounts was used to derive themes and sub-themes for results analysis. Complexity Leadership Theory as a meta-theoretical framework was used for the study (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). The framework views leadership as a complex, dynamic, and interactive interface between organizational and situational aspects that enable adaptivity, learning, and innovation in knowledge-based institutions (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). The findings revealed that systemic leadership was critical during an erratic and uncertain period. Secondly, a design thinking approach for academic leaders is an indication that leaders are willing to accept change for universities to remain competitive in a dynamic world. Thirdly, distributed leadership helps an academic leader to be emotionally stable and sound in responding to a crisis. In conclusion, the paper presents that new mindsets, attitudes, and practices in academic leadership must be assimilated into the new reality of universities, successfully leveraging the experience obtained during crisis situations.

Keywords: Academic Leadership, COVID-19 Adaptability, Systemic Leadership Distributed Leadership, Qualitative Research, Complexity Leadership Theory

Factors that Negatively Impact on e-Learning as a Pedagogy in Higher Education: Challenges Confronting Students and Lecturers.

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Abstract

There is already a myriad of evidence in the literature to show that historically black universities in South Africa (SA) are struggling with the adoption of e-learning. Now, the advent of COVID-19 pandemic on the 5th March 2020 just added more challenges to these already struggling institutions. After a brief account of the general background to these institutions, the article focuses on the two main thrusts of the document: exploration, identification, interrogation and analyses of the factors that hampers effective e-learning pedagogy as a result of the advent of COVID-19. The study adopted an ethnographic approach, gathered data from twenty-two lecturers and students through interviews, focus group conversations and hanging out approaches. This qualitative study that uses an exploratory design sought to identify, examine, interrogate and analyse the factors that impact on successful e-learning pedagogy on the specifically selected universities. Data were elicited using a self-designed questionnaire and in-depth focus group interviews with twenty-two (22) research subjects from a specifically selected university in Limpopo Province, South Africa. These two instruments were also complemented by other relevant scholarly texts. Furthermore, the study used Environmental equivalence theory and Afrocentricity framework as its linchpin. An analysis of the data revealed the following key findings: low motivation to study through e-learning among students (particularly first year students); The shift from conventional teaching to technology based learning, have been viewed pejoratively by a significantly high number of students and lecturers. Lack of lecturers training to facilitate e-learning based pedagogy; lack delivery of electronic gadgets to enable learning; poor Internet connectivity in some remote villages; no tutors to help blind students; infrastructure that is not suited for 'social distance' protocol; lack of teaching and learning materials that tailored for e-learning purposes. Some students argued that e-learning does not suit their learning style and somehow infringes on their right of academic freedom. Problem of self-regulated learning (SRL) among students. Lack of practicals for teacher trainees. The findings may inform English writing lecturers, teachers, instructors and curriculum developers in various academic institutions to better plan for effective e-learning in future.

Exploring Online and Hybrid Course Design in Promoting Active Engagement in Teaching and Learning Contexts.

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Abstract

The current COVID 19 pandemic has propelled and made it mandatory for evidently all courses in Universities to be taught using online technologies. This would mean a mandatory move to hybrid models of teaching and learning as it is evident that there is no possibility of going back to a complete face-to-face lecture environment that is not integrating online teaching and learning environments. There has been a cry from the academic environment on how to make student responsive and engaged in a very lonely online environment as opposed to face-to-face classrooms that are seen as engaging and responsive. This study seeks to investigate how academics design their online courses such that they can promote active engagements in their online classrooms. The research design is that of an interpretative paradigm within case study design using a qualitative research approach. The population for the study is made up of three faculties extended curriculum programmes lecturers (Faculty of; Management and Commerce, Social Science and Humanities, and Science & Agriculture) in a traditional University in South Africa. The main reason behind selecting three faculties in extended curriculum is to understand the difference in disciplinary engagements within hybrid models and to enhance extended curriculum student engagement. In each of these three faculties, five courses were selected because of their engagement in online learning and hybrid learning initiatives, making a total number of 15 courses. Once these course environments have been studied then a focus group interview of the five staff members in the faculties has been conducted. Activity Theory is used to analyse the hybrid/blended learning environments and focus group interviews analysis to identify conditions, which enable and constrain engagement in these hybrid environments to explore potential tensions to inform the kind of academic and pedagogical support needed through academic development in teaching and learning. The researcher argues that it is imperative that academic development supports and enhances the development and agency of academics in creating active and engaging hybrid or online environments

Using Translanguaging as a Resource for Teaching: PGCE pre-service Science Teachers Project.

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Abstract

The over-reliance on English as the medium of instruction greatly disadvantages learners from non-English speaking communities. Research in different countries and contexts has revealed that learners learn better when their home language is used as the medium of instruction. Translanguaging could be one way of transforming pedagogy leading to epistemic success and access among most African students if their entire language repertoires including their indigenous languages are employed in the pedagogic process. The Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) is piloting a project where Trial and Matric examination papers are set in IsiXhosa, the main indigenous language of the Eastern Cape. This project though noble has been in our view, a shotgun approach as both the teachers and students must be first taught in a translanguaging setting if assessment in IsiXhosa is to be beneficial to the intended learners. The focus of this article is to explore how pre-service science teachers can be guided to apply translanguaging in teaching and learning. An interpretive qualitative approach was used to conduct the study using a population of PGCE Natural Sciences pre-service teachers from which a sample of 26 PGCE student teachers, their science lecturer, and one Curriculum Transformation expert. It was revealed that translanguaging improves the academic performance and engagement of the students as they engage with the science content in their home language in conjunction with English (the dominantly used LOTL). The study recommends that more resources should be used to train pre-service teachers on how to use translanguaging during teaching and learning.

Keywords: Translanguaging, language parity, indigenous language, curriculum transformation, teaching resource.

Exploring the Impact of covid 19 Pandemic on the Bachelor of Education (Senior phase & FET) Mathematics Lecturers' Pedagogical Methods.

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Abstract

The impact of the Covid19 pandemic has forced most South African Universities that were not using the online teaching method to abruptly shift from the traditional chalkboard method of teaching and learning to a completely technology-based method. The Covid19 pandemic happened exactly when most universities especially in the rural parts of the country were still adapting to implementing the fourth industrial revolution (4IR). This left many lecturers with no other options but to adapt and find ways to equip themselves with skills for integrating technology in order for the process of teaching and learning to continue effectively. The abstract nature of mathematics has been a great challenge during this transition. The institutions were challenged to come up with online-based platforms and software that are conducive to mathematical teaching and learning. This paper is still at its developmental stage and intends to explore the impact of covid 19 pandemic on the Bachelor of Education (BEd) Senior phase (SP) & Further Education and Training (FET) mathematics lecturers' pedagogical methods. The study involves three BEd (SP & FET) mathematics lecturers as participants. The open-ended survey is being administered in order to answer the research question of this paper. This paper firstly provides preliminary data on participants' experiences on the impact of covid19 on their mathematical pedagogical methods. Secondly, the paper provides a brief overview of ways in which covid19 had (or not) transformed the participants' pedagogical method styles. I also aim to find out the pedagogical methods that the mathematics lecturers used during the covid19 pandemic and whether those methods are effective or not.

Lecturers' Perceptions on Transformation in Pedagogy During Covid-19.

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Abstract

Background and purpose: The emergence of COVID-19 pandemic undoubtedly resulted in devastating socio-economic challenges across the world. Many governments have enacted restrictive measures to prevent social gatherings and create social separation in an attempt to contain the spread of the disease. This resulted in the closure of higher education institutions and a significant movement away from traditional classroom-based teaching and learning in favor of a virtual approach. While higher education may have transformed, and moved to online due to Covid-19, it is unknown whether lecturers were ready to effectively engage in online teaching method/s and course content development. This literature review is conducted to elicit relevant evidence on Online teaching and Online material development, challenges and opportunities in the era of COVID-19 pandemic. We are going to review literature on pedagogy since the beginning of covid 19. A comprehensive literature search will be conducted for relevant studies published during covid 19. In addition, reference lists of studies identified from the initial search will be used to retrieve additional relevant studies. The search terms used will be Covid-19, Online teaching method, Material development, E-learning, lecturer perceptions and higher education. An inclusion and exclusion criteria will be developed to select the most relevant articles for final review. Studies will be eligible for inclusion if they address higher education Online teaching and E-material, challenges and opportunities in the era of Covid-19. While numerous studies have been published on the pandemic, only few studies address the depth of Online teaching and Material development, associated challenges and opportunities during the period of Covid-19. This study sort to explore lecturer perceptions on the rapid transition caused by Covid 19. This study point to a future research implications in that most studies that were conducted on Covid 19, mainly focused on students' experiences, very few studies focus on lecturers' perceptions. This study hope to establish whether lecturers faced challenges implementing online pedagogy and developing relevant material during Covid 19. This study aim to provide suggestions on key improvement on education policy makers and higher education strategist to pay attention on developing proactive strategies for Online teaching whilst maintaining high standards of teaching and learning.

Keywords: Covid 19, Pedagogy, Online teaching methods, Study material development, Content Education and technologies.

Micro-Learning the Key to Students' Engagement: An Empirical Study at a University in The Eastern Cape.

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Abstract

Student engagement during teaching and learning is one key factor that contributes to student success. Research has acknowledged the role of micro-learning in contributing to a high level of student engagement during teaching and learning. This quantitative research focused on the role of micro-learning during online sessions contributing to student engagement during teaching and learning. Micro-learning is a teaching and learning strategy for online learning that provide opportunities for students to engage in a variety of snippets of educative activities. The study was underpinned by the social-cultural theory. Qualitative data was collected using an open-ended qualitative questionnaire from a sample of 145 students and 4 lecturers randomly selected across faculties in different departments. Two lecturers used micro-learning and two used the traditional approach to teaching and learning. After a week of teaching and learning using the approaches, learners recorded their experiences on the closed questionnaire. The theory maintains that students learn more when they are allowed to share ideas with their peers in communities of property. The study revealed that students experienced more engagement when learning was structured in small activities that took a few minutes of research, discussions, and collaborative problem-solving sessions. The study also revealed that when lessons are broken into smaller focused units, student attention is increased. As such the study recommended that lecturers using online learning should make use of the various digital tools on the LMS to differentiate activities that should be parceled in micro-sets. The study also recommends that more lecturers should be in-serviced on how to make effective use of the digital tools embedded in the LMS design micro-lessons that scaffold learners to achieve more from online learning.

Keywords: student engagement, collaboration, micro-learning, socialization, scaffolding

Africanization of curriculum development in South African Institutions of Higher Learning: the case of language policy.

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Abstract

The shift of teaching using Eurocentric language to Africanisation curriculum triggered a great transformation in South African education system. This is premised on the design and implementation of curriculum with little or no consideration of other languages. This switch of language from a colonial to African languages divide the environment to achieve its objective. This resulted to a discourse where there is no connection between the language policy and other existing policies. Faculties failed to address the disjuncture between the existing and current language policy that is unclear about the decoloniality of language in a classroom. This paper aims to explore the discourse of paradigm shifts models and approaches of Africanisation in curriculum development as a new approach to teaching, learning and assessment especially in the switch of language. In addition, to seek the relationship between the existing teaching and learning policies in institutions of higher learning and their implementation plans concerning africanisation. This paper has adopted a literature search to synthesize the key concepts underpinning the implementation of language Africanism flow. The sample of this study is comprised of the legal framework, existing strategies that link Eurocentric models, and Africanisation of languages in higher learning environments. Thematic comparison analysis will be employed to synthesise data and observations around the issue of language policy. Institutions of higher learning in South Africa need to pay critical attention to the issue of Eurocentric versus Africanisation of curriculum. Perhaps, each model has both its advantages and shortcomings and thus continuous search becomes often necessary to explore the best approach to sustainable teaching and learning.

Keywords: Africanisation, curriculum development, discourse, Eurocentric, institutions of higher learning.

Assessment of First year students' prior knowledge as a pathway to address the inadequate mastery of Academic Literacy.

Abstract

The satisfaction of the academic needs of diverse student population in the advent of COVID-19 era is a major conundrum in the academic literacy modules in many institutions of Higher Education. However, it is imperative to understand the students' prior knowledge as an effective strategy to gauge the inadequate mastery within the module content. The purpose of this study is to assess and address the challenges facing students as they adapt to the institution of higher learning at one of the South African rural universities. Purposive sampling technique and survey questionnaire was uploaded on the Moodle LMS of Academic literacy module to solicit the sections that require meticulous attention. Quantitative method was employed to solicit the descriptive and numerical data for critical analysis. The hundred and twenty (120) first year level students enrolled in the academic year 2022 who are in the extended degree programme were sampled as the participants in this study. The findings of this study exhibit the poor basic computer skills, reading compression, poor paragraph skills, dictionary literacy skills, direct and indirect speech, identification of grammatical errors, struggle to produce coherent and cohesive writing. Moreover, this approach seems to be effective and efficient in gratifying the student's individual needs in relation to the English for academic purposes. This pathway has enabled the lecturers to assess what students know, such that they can strategically allot time to the areas of the greatest need. This strategy further aided lecturers fine-tune the content of their instruction. This paper recommends that the pre-existing knowledge should be integrated with the new content to expedite the students' understanding of the subject and maximise the conscious control in each section.

Keywords: competency, conceptualisation, inadequacy, metacognition, perception, syllabification.

Facing the Unknown: Managing Work Integrated Learning in the Midst of Covid-19.

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Abstract

As an Environmental Health Work Integrated Learning (WIL) coordinator at a University of Technology, my experiences have led me to develop and refine an efficient process of recording, monitoring and managing WIL for the four-year Bachelor of Health Science degree students. The WIL component is distributed as credits or notional hours over the four years of the degree to a collective prerequisite of 100 days as per the Health Professionals Council of South Africa (HPCSA) Environmental Health directive. The start of the National COVID-19 lockdown, led to growing uncertainty regarding academia and the new normal to be expected. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) had to devise plans to adapt to the circumstances of Teaching, Learning and Assessing (TLA) online as new updates were provided by the Minister of Higher Education. A plethora of mixed feelings from confusion to fear has been echoed by many staff and students. For the WIL component of the EH profession, the premise has always been the exposure of students to the work/industry field in order to afford them various opportunities to form a connect or link between the theory (academics) and practices (exposure of the field). During the restrictions from 2019 to 2022, students have not been afforded the opportunity to gain the skills required through exposure to field visits, industries or municipal placements. These skills are critical to enhancing employability and the development of a well-rounded graduate. Universities of Technology offering Environmental Health would have to find online or theory based activities to fill the void of conventional WIL.

This reflection piece will share the experience and challenges of navigating Work Integrated Learning for Environmental Health at a University of Technology.

Teaches' Experiences of Integrating of Cellular Phones as 4IR Teaching tool for the Development of English First Additional Language Oral skills.

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Abstract

Research shows that the use of traditional textbook pedagogical approaches for the development of English second language oral skills no longer respond to the learning needs of the digital 21st century learners. This study explores teachers' experiences of integrating cellular phones as a Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) teaching and learning tool for the development of English second language oral skills. The study is underpinned by Connectivism Theory (Siemens & Downes, 2005) and Socio-cultural Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1978). Fifteen teachers from five schools in the Pinetown District participated in the study. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group interview. Data was analysed thematically. Teachers expressed their concerns about the school policies which prohibits the use of cellular phones in the classrooms. They view this as a hindrance towards the integration of cellular phones for learning of English oral skills. Affordability of cellular phones, especially for learners from underprivileged socio-economic background, was also a challenge to the implementation of the integration. Nevertheless, collectively, teachers believed that the use of cellular phones may transform the teaching and learning of oral skills and may respond to the learning needs of the 21st century learners. The study concludes that teachers' digital capacity and their positive attitudes towards cellular phones pedagogy is fundamental for successful integration of cellular phones into learning of English second language oral skills in South African schools.

Key words: 4th Industrial Revolution, Cellular phones, Connectivism theory, Socio-cultural theory, English oral skills, cellular phone school policies.

A Decolonial Approach Toward a Creative Deployment of Digital Technologies to Enhance Learning and Teaching in one of the South African Universities.

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Abstract

The integration of digital technologies into curriculum design has become normative in the institutions of higher learning. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the prevalence of 21st-century digital learning technologies in numerous curriculum-related learning environments. Institutions of higher education progressively tuned to use learning technologies to resource and support teaching and learning environments in either face-to-face or blended or hybrid approaches. However, little or no knowledge is accessible on educators' perceptions of the value of digital technologies. The purpose of this study is to attain a better understanding of lecturers' insights into the worth of digital learning technologies and the kind of academic support for the adoption and integration of technologies into teaching and learning. The humanistic pedagogy was used as an underpinning theory to collect lecturers' perceptions and worth of digital technologies for quality instructional content in the curriculum design processes. The key research question for this study was "What are educators' perceptions of the worth and value of digital technologies to enhance student learning? The data were collected through open-ended online questionnaires to lecturers who attended the Curriculum Design and Review workshops. The participants were teaching across different faculties at the university in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. Atlas.ti was used to code and analyze data qualitatively according to the four selected principles of humanistic pedagogy. The findings of the study have revealed that curriculum design interventions that are premised on humanistic pedagogy can be used as a vehicle to raise lecturers' voices and perceptions about the value and worth of integrating digital technologies into curriculum design. In return, the findings have also shown that the humanistic pedagogy approach can assist in designing data-driven interventions to fast-track the adoption of technologies by lecturers.

Keywords: COVID-19, Digital Learning Technologies, Module Design, Student Learning, Atlas.ti.

How International Collaborations Saved Learning and Teaching During the Covid Pandemic: A Case Of The Tut/Haaga Helia (Finish) Professional Development Programme.

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Abstract

What started off as an attempt to develop lecturers at TUT to become university teachers in collaboration with the Haaga Helia University of Applied Sciences in Finland in 2016, became the most notable capacity development initiative to prepare lecturers for emergency remote teaching (ERT) during the Covid Pandemic. TUT has always aimed to uplift its lecturing staff who had content knowledge in their specialist fields, to also be skilled in pedagogical skills as well. This was the pioneering ideation that led to the signing of a MOU with the Finish University. When ERT had to be implemented at short notice due to the Covid regulations, it became clear that the foundational work done with lecturers in the programme, enabled them to adapt and successfully implement ERT better than those who had not participated in the programme. In my reflections on the collaborations and the learnings from the Finish and their unique approach to education, I highlight how these factors became enabling levers for lecturers to hit the ground running and to implement EMR like pro's. A research indaba held in 2021, showcasing lecturer's experiences during ERT was used as the main source of the data collection as well as observations and faculty report analysis. A qualitative lens was used to sift through the presentations and to match how the competencies developed the programme were transferred to the ERT situation. It was clear from the presentations, that lecturers that participated in the programme found it easier to adapt to and apply online teaching strategies as well as manage student vulnerabilities that emerged during this time.

Transformative Pedagogies: Towards Multimodal Teaching and Learning in Higher Education from Electrical Engineering.

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Abstract

Perspective The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the Higher Education system and along with accelerating globalization, it has propelled the system's dependence on online teaching and learning. This shift has affected both teachers and learners with respect to their modes of interaction, participation, and engagement, from the traditional face-to-face modality to a now multimodal approach where the integration of e-learning platforms into the existing resources are being practiced. The purpose of this article is to address the efficacy of the multimodal teaching-learning approach in Higher Education from the Electrical Engineering perspective and explore the transformation of the existing conventional teaching-learning practices to the new normal blended (synchronous and asynchronous) teaching-learning approach. A qualitative and quantitative approach is employed to study how practical and operative a multimodal teaching-learning approach is from both teacher and learner perspective respectively within the Department of Electrical Engineering.

Transformative and Student-centred Pedagogies Employed by Language Lecturers at a South African University.

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Abstract

The coronavirus pandemic has influenced every aspect of human life, including teaching and learning in higher education. During an unprecedented period of disruption unleashed by the pandemic, lecturers were forced to embrace change and integrate digital tools into their teaching. At the Historically Disadvantaged Institution (HDI) where this study was undertaken, the Teaching Learning Centre rolled out training programmes on the use of the Blackboard LMS and provided digital support to students and lecturers. The present study explored teaching strategies employed by lecturers during the COVID-19 pandemic to enhance student learning. The SAMR model of technology integration which proposes four different degrees of classroom technology integration- Substitution, Augmentation, Modification and Re-definition, was used as a lens to analyse lesson transcripts collected from four purposively selected lecturers in two faculties. Structured interviews were also used to collect data. The findings suggest that lecturers have adjusted their assessment practices during the pandemic and shifted their pedagogical orientation towards student-centred and transformational pedagogies that foster student engagement and deep approaches learning.

Keywords: Technology integration, assessment practices, student-centred, SAMR model, deep approaches to learning, transformational pedagogies, COVID-19 pandemic.

Re-Envisioning Academic Literacies Development in a Post Pandemic Period for Improved Epistemic Access in Higher Education.

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Abstract

Academic literacy understandings have been shifting since the 1980s but a new re-envisioning of how these literacies has now become even more urgent. Like all the other areas of life, the Covid 19 pandemic forced many academic developers responsible for literacies development to rethink their practices. Before the pandemic, most literacy programmes in the writing centres and faculties were characterised primarily by face-to-face interventions. However, most interventions were subsequently conducted online and as the pandemic recedes, practitioners are being forced to reflect on the future of academic literacies development in higher education. Using the social realist lens as an analytical tool, this conceptual paper argues that it is now vital to re-envision how structure, culture and agency need to morph if literacies development in higher education is to be achieved. Central pillars of changes proposed by this paper include the re-envisioning of peer-to-peer pedagogy, use of translanguaging, making courses writing intensive, scholarship of learning and teaching, collaborations with disciplinary lecturers, and a reimagined academic literacies curriculum.

A Seat at the Table: Participatory Parity as A Tool for Social Justice.

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Abstract

The COVID 19 pandemic and associated lockdown had devastating effects on South African Higher Education (SAHE) and its various stakeholders. The SAHE context was still very tense and strained post FeesMustFall (FMF) and the attempts to keep SAHE running amidst the COVID-19 pandemic meant a high importance was placed on the use of information technologies (Karakose 2021), alternative learning and teaching methodologies and the need for remote access to learning and teaching materials. While FMF protests highlighted the economic inequalities at play in the SAHE sector, COVID-19 and emergency remote learning and teaching however, brought to light the inequalities across the country in terms of access to technology and IT resources such as reliable Wi-Fi and mobile network reception/signal (Du Plessis et al. 2022). These inequalities had been masked by students' physical presence on SAHE campuses, access to its associated amenities and only came to the foreground when students returned to their hometowns where environments were often less than favourable to continue with their studies. The COVID-19 pandemic challenged SAHE faculty to be innovative in their approach to learning and teaching while still maintaining the socially just learning and teaching environment FMF managed to bring about. Fraser (1998:102) called the notion of parity in participation, justice that requires social arrangements that permit all members of society to interact with one another as peers while satisfying at least the following two conditions: (1) The distribution of material resources in order to ensure independence and voice (distributive justice) (2) Institutionalised cultural patterns of interpretation and evaluation which expresses equal respect for all participants and ensures equal opportunity for all to achieve esteem (philosophy of recognition). Although Fraser (1998) wrote about participatory parity as related to participation in society, Garraway (2017) highlights "participatory parity" as work which can be used to address injustice in SAHE. This paper will explore how a lecturer in an extended programme in design attempted to maintain socially just pedagogies while teaching a diverse group of students remotely. Participatory Parity (Fraser 1998) will be used as the lens through which the lecturer's initiatives are viewed.

Construction, Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Knowledge in a Live Online Class.

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Abstract

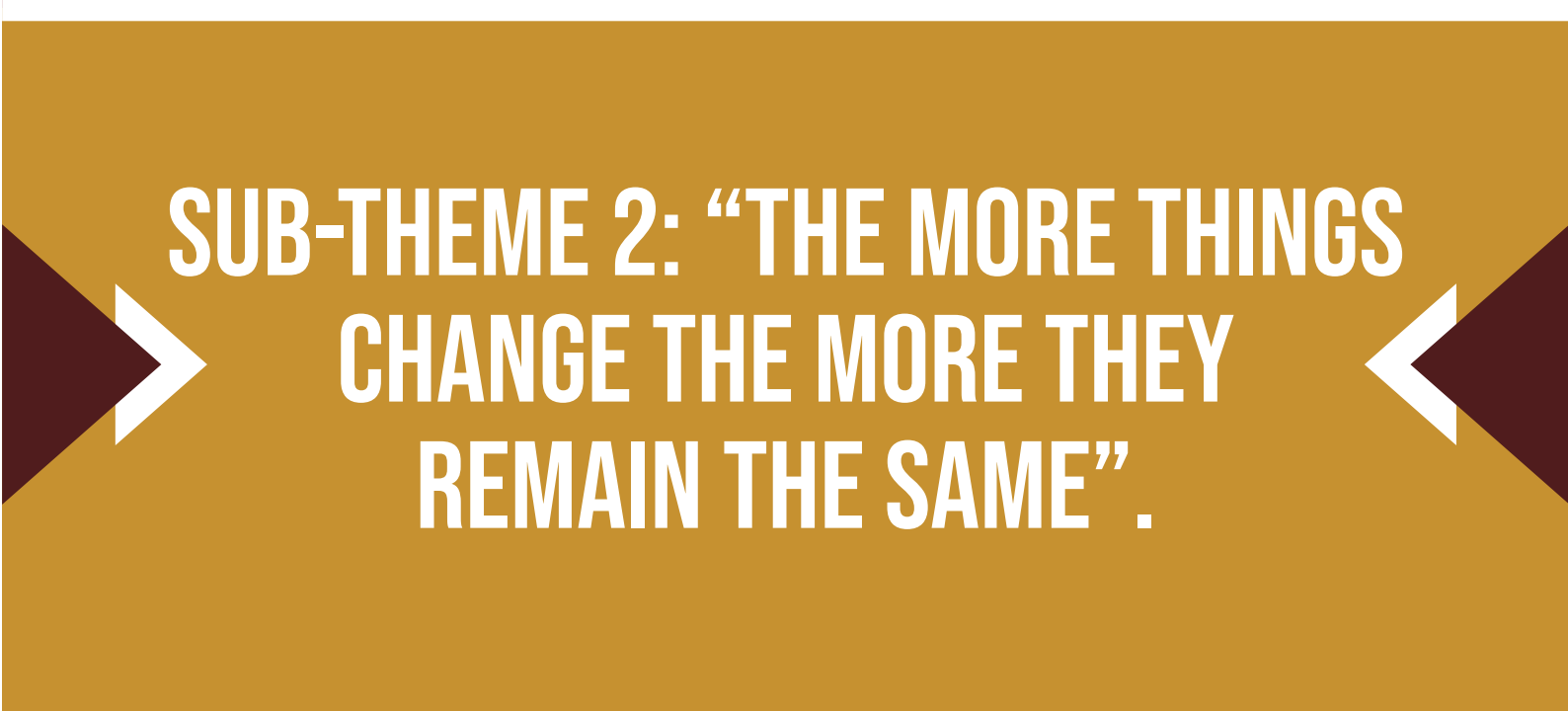
Theorists such as Michel Foucault argue that knowledge is power. This means that by virtue of being knowledgeable, you are automatically vested with power. A live online class is not an exception on the basis that a lecturer interacts with students who comes to class with prior knowledge, which calls for negotiation of meaning, discourses, and beliefs. There is a lot of existing literature on knowledge construction, but scholars are silent about deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge within a classroom interaction. In this study, I used the Social Constructivism theory and cognitive apprenticeship as a theoretical point of departure in mapping how knowledge has been traditionally constructed. Be that as it may, I further bring into context, linguistics concepts from the work of the French philosopher, Jacques Derrida (1960s) who talks about deconstructing and reconstructing to expose internal oppositions and supposed contradictions in human knowledge. With a distinct focus on a virtual lecturer room, this study explored how knowledge is constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed in a virtual lecture room. The findings of the study exhibit that knowledge is constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed through linguistics and visual discourse segments between the lecturer and students. Knowledge is power and this power is asymmetrical. Deconstruction can be used to critically dismantle traditions and prior which does not align with the module curricular, then reconstruct and construct new knowledge in alignment with what is already in existence. Nature and culture, speech and writing, mind and body, presence, and absence, inside and outside, literal, and metaphorical, intelligible, and sensible, and form and meaning, among many others form basis of theoretical tools exhibited in an online lecture room. This study seeks to contribute immensely to knowledge construction within a digital era and to improve lecturer teaching practices.

A Seat at the Table: Participatory Parity as A Tool for Social Justice.

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Abstract

The COVID 19 pandemic and associated lockdown had devastating effects on South African Higher Education (SAHE) and its various stakeholders. The SAHE context was still very tense and strained post FeesMustFall (FMF) and the attempts to keep SAHE running amidst the COVID-19 pandemic meant a high importance was placed on the use of information technologies (Karakose 2021), alternative learning and teaching methodologies and the need for remote access to learning and teaching materials. While FMF protests highlighted the economic inequalities at play in the SAHE sector, COVID-19 and emergency remote learning and teaching however, brought to light the inequalities across the country in terms of access to technology and IT resources such as reliable Wi-Fi and mobile network reception/signal (Du Plessis et al. 2022). These inequalities had been masked by students' physical presence on SAHE campuses, access to its associated amenities and only came to the foreground when students returned to their hometowns where environments were often less than favourable to continue with their studies. The COVID-19 pandemic challenged SAHE faculty to be innovative in their approach to learning and teaching while still maintaining the socially just learning and teaching environment FMF managed to bring about. Fraser (1998:102) called the notion of parity in participation, justice that requires social arrangements that permit all members of society to interact with one another as peers while satisfying at least the following two conditions: (1) The distribution of material resources in order to ensure independence and voice (distributive justice) (2) Institutionalised cultural patterns of interpretation and evaluation which expresses equal respect for all participants and ensures equal opportunity for all to achieve esteem (philosophy of recognition). Although Fraser (1998) wrote about participatory parity as related to participation in society, Garraway (2017) highlights "participatory parity" as work which can be used to address injustice in SAHE. This paper will explore how a lecturer in an extended programme in design attempted to maintain socially just pedagogies while teaching a diverse group of students remotely. Participatory Parity (Fraser 1998) will be used as the lens through which the lecturer's initiatives are viewed.



**SUB-THEME 2: “THE MORE THINGS
CHANGE THE MORE THEY
REMAIN THE SAME” .**

Exploring a Learning Design to Teach Computer Programming Online: A Personal Reflection using a Design-Based Approach.

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Abstract

The learning design of synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning for an introductory computer programming course was found to be a challenge in an online environment. This educational challenge resulted in poor engagement and interaction amongst students and lecturers, resulting in disengaged lessons where students experience feelings of isolation. In addressing the educational problem, a new learning design was explored to improve the lecturer-student-content interactions and to promote better engagement when teaching computer programming in an online environment. A design-based research methodology was used to address the learning design challenge. Initially, a set of draft design principles were developed to address the educational challenge. Using the lens of a sociocultural approach, a learning environment was developed, which was guided by the design principles. Using one iterative cycle, the draft design principles were refined, and the learning environment was improved. The outcome of this study yielded the development of design principles that can be used by other researchers and practitioners in the online teaching and learning on computer programming.

Keywords: online teaching, computer programming, design-based research

The usage of the LMS and how it impacts meaningful learning.

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Abstract

The global pandemic forced all teaching and learning practices to move to the online environment. Since then, there has been a drastic increase in students who pass as well as the pass marks attained by students. However, when one compares the LMS reports there it is clear that the engagement tools are not used often. This then poses the question as to whether teaching and learning practices are primary to teach for testing and passing instead of optimal learning and development. There has been an overall increase from 2019 to 2022 (first semester); in the number of course sites created (1.3%), the accessing of VUTela the LMS (3.3%), as well as a significant increase in the number of users (16.2%) compared to the 1% increase from 2015 to 2016. Indicating that there was a marked shift in both academics and students using online facilities in a blended learning approach which could have been in response to the university shutdowns of the previous two years. In addition, there has been an increase of 20.3% in the number of online course evaluations compared to only an 8% increase between 2015 and 2016 for the same period.

COVID-19 pandemic had a direct and significant impact on education both nationally and internationally. When schools were hit by COVID-19 in 2020, yes, they switched to online education. According to the U.S Department of education, online learning is learning that is undertaken on a computer by means of the internet. The bigger question is, were universities prepared or are they equipped to do online learning? How did they respond to online education? VUT students are placed in the knowledge code (ER+, SR-) because the attributes of students are downplayed, meaning student social backgrounds SR-(biographical history, how they learn, socio-economic background, ICT resources and knowledge) are not taken into consideration when lecturers teach using ICT, hence the students just reproduce the knowledge ER which called rote learning. This is evident when in some instances they demand to be assessed only on the information that is available on the provided slides. They just reproduce the epistemic relation (knowledge) and no deep learning is taking place. This has an impact on how they use technology and for what purpose. Conversely, this is also impacted by where the lecturers are placed in relation to the LCT code.

Work-Integrated Learning in Medical Laboratory Science and Medical Technology during COVID-19.

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Abstract

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) remains an integral part of the Medical Laboratory Science and Medical Technology curriculum. However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a reconfiguration of operations and practices in institutions of higher education globally. The current theoretically based paper reflects on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the instructional offering of Work Integrated Learning. A recount of the lessons of the transitional phase of our pedagogical approach from the traditional instructional method to strategic implementation of Problem Based Learning (PBL) in the (WIL) module is shared, including highlighting the overall long-term implications of remote instruction as an alternative to experiential learning within the Medical Laboratory Science and Medical Technology education.

Factors Influencing the Adoption and Integration of Technology into Teaching and Learning (eLearning) in South African Higher Education: A UTAUT Approach.

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Abstract

Technological advancements have revolutionised industries, including the higher education sector. Over the years, we have seen a proliferation of educational technologies with varying adoption stages. In South Africa, the higher education sector-wide adoption has been relatively slow, only to get a “wake-up call” when COVID-19 struck. On the backdrop of such an experience and in preparation for any such situation in future and aligning with the dictates of the fourth industrial revolution (4th IR), it is essential for higher education institutions (HEIs) to fully understand the factors that influence the adoption and integration of technology in higher education. Previous studies have identified numerous factors that influence the acceptance and adoption of technology in various spheres. However, there seems to be less appetite for applying the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Usage of Technology (UTUAT) model to investigate and understand the factors that influence the acceptance and adoption of educational technology in South Africa. The UTAUT model is the most comprehensive and robust theoretical framework for understanding technology acceptance across different situations. Therefore, this study employs the UTAUT to determine the factors influencing the adoption and integration of technology into teaching and learning. Students and academics from two universities of technology will be surveyed, and data will be analysed using the famous Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS).

Keywords: educational technology, e-learning, Unified Theory of Acceptance and Usage of Technology (UTUAT), higher education institutions.

Challenges of adopting 4IR in Walter Sisulu University in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

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Abstract

4IR is a progressive facility that includes computer-generated things built on current and developing interoperable ICT. In understanding the challenges and expectations of the South African higher education institutions, such as Walter Sisulu University, the fourth industrial revolution needs to improve on existing HEI's 4IR infrastructure. The paper seeks to identify the challenges faced by Walter Sisulu University in implementing and adopting 4IR. The data used in this research were derived from both primary and secondary sources. The secondary data was collected through a detailed review of extant literature. In contrast, the primary data was collected through a questionnaire survey distributed to Butterworth campus and Buffalo City campus in the Eastern Cape province. It focused on students currently registered within the university. One hundred and thirty (130) questionnaires were received from the one hundred and fifty (150) sent out, representing an 85% response rate. In ensuring the reliability of the research questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha coefficient reliability was conducted on the scaled research questions. Findings from the research were analysed using descriptive statistics and exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Research findings were revealed that the challenges facing Walter Sisulu University in adopting 4IR were lack of proportion in teaching & technology, inadequate funding of universities, poor network connectivity in some areas & basic understanding of the usage of mobile devices, and lack of communication between stakeholders within the university, poor political interference of SRC, poor information & communication technology application approach, inadequate information & communication technology expertise, and practice and not enough staff to operate the systems in university. Therefore, Walter Sisulu university must overcome the challenges caused by unenhanced educational infrastructure within the university. Since it has been identified beyond reasonable doubt that HEIs are encompassed with challenges centered on inadequacy in educational infrastructure and, arguably, skilled personnel, 4IR is therefore required.

Originality

The study contributes to the body of knowledge on harnessing the 4IR for improved infrastructure in the Eastern Cape, South African higher education institutions.

Keywords: Challenges, infrastructure, Fourth Industrial Revolution, Poor Infrastructure.

The Role of Video Conferencing Platforms (Zoom, Teams Etc.) in Ensuring Quality Teaching and Learning.

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Abstract

With the advent of COVID-19 epidemic institutions of higher learning were compelled to change the traditional way of how teaching and learning takes place. It could be argued that the changes brought by COVID-19 epidemic have helped universities to adapt more easily with the use technological resources. However, there is a need to assess the role and impact of technology when teaching and learning takes place. It is understood that for teaching and learning to thrive engagement is at the centre. The adoption of more technological resources by universities is proof that South African universities are at the centre of bringing change through innovation. However, the gap that comes with technological facilities/resources is that they don't cater to all people involve in teaching and learning. Particularly with the use of video conferences e.g. zoom, teams, etc. to what extent they compromise the quality of teaching and learning. As much as they provide a room for engagement, to what extent do they cater to the well management of teaching and learning? When it comes to video conferences there is both good and bad at play. Students tend to not attend their classes on such platforms, this creates a barrier for teaching and learning to thrive and produce quality education. Teaching and learning comprise of a student and a lecture. Without proper management of video conferences teaching and learning is compromised. Similarly to lecturers they get demotivated to teach only few students in such platforms, and if a lecturer continues to teach a small group out a big number of students that have registered for a particular module, again the quality of teaching and learning is inevitably compromised. Some universities have students who live in remote places; yes, they may be sponsored data somehow that is not enough. Teaching and learning thrives when they is proper structured engagement between a student and a lecture.

Key words: Video conferences, technology, teaching and learning, Covid-19.

Pandemic proofing the curriculum: A review of the Electrical Engineering Curriculum Transformation incorporating Multimodal Teaching and Learning Approaches.

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Abstract

The age of cybernetics is upon us with technology advancing at an outstanding rate, especially in this fourth industrial revolution. The 21st century engineering students face challenges vastly different from those experienced by engineers of the previous century. The fast globalisation of industry and commerce, amongst other things, has created new challenges in many spheres including politics, the economy, human society and education. The year 2020 saw the advent of COVID19 which further aggravated the already challenged sectors. It is, thus, necessary to produce electrical engineering professionals with requisite skills, knowledge and capacity to adapt or change, keeping abreast with new trends in the industry. The curriculum plays a vital role in the creation of such. It is thus necessary to align the curriculum to multifaceted needs – 21st century needs (and beyond), country's economic growth needs as well as institutional sustainability and growth needs amongst others. Curriculum development plays a vital role in the higher education system. This paper will discuss the curriculum and highlight the contextual factors as well as curriculum responsiveness and alignment.

Facing the Unknown: Managing Work Integrated Learning in the Midst of Covid-19.

Melishnee Ruthanam

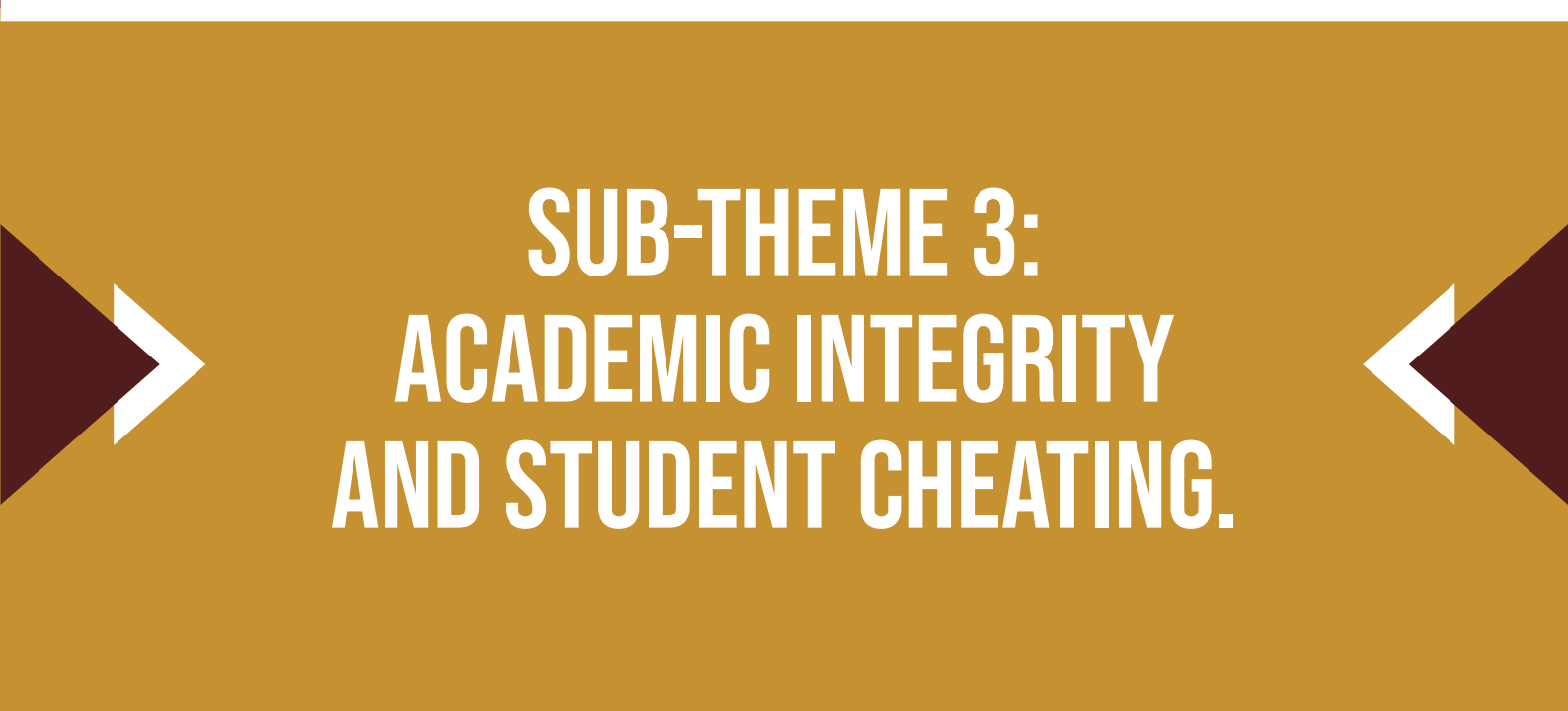
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Abstract

As an Environmental Health Work Integrated Learning (WIL) coordinator at a University of Technology, my experiences have led me to develop and refine an efficient process of recording, monitoring and managing WIL for the four-year Bachelor of Health Science degree students. The WIL component is distributed as credits or notional hours over the four years of the degree to a collective prerequisite of 100 days as per the Health Professionals Council of South Africa (HPCSA) Environmental Health directive. The start of the National COVID-19 lockdown, led to growing uncertainty regarding academia and the new normal to be expected. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) had to devise plans to adapt to the circumstances of Teaching, Learning and Assessing (TLA) online as new updates were provided by the Minister of Higher Education. A plethora of mixed feelings from confusion to fear has been echoed by many staff and students. For the WIL component of the EH profession, the premise has always been the exposure of students to the work/industry field in order to afford them various opportunities to form a connect or link between the theory (academics) and practices (exposure of the field). During the restrictions from 2019 to 2022, students have not been afforded the opportunity to gain the skills required through exposure to field visits, industries or municipal placements. These skills are critical to enhancing employability and the development of a well-rounded graduate. Universities of Technology offering Environmental Health would have to find online or theory-based activities to fill the void of conventional WIL.

This reflection piece will share the experience and challenges of navigating Work Integrated Learning for Environmental Health at a University of Technology.



SUB-THEME 3: ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND STUDENT CHEATING.

Reflections on the Experiences of First-Year English Proficiency Students' use of the Invigilator app At an ODL University in South Africa.

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Abstract

This study reports on the first-year English Proficiency for university students' participation in e-proctoring through the invigilator app during online exams at a mega ODeL university in South Africa. This study particularly examines the students' experiences and perspectives on the use of the invigilator app. A mixed methods approach was used involving twenty-five (n=25) students who completed questionnaires and twenty (n=20) who took part in online interviews. Recently there has been growing concern about the compromised integrity of online assessment, which is riddled with cheating and dishonest practices, particularly with the move from contact venue-based assessment to the online mode of assessment. Gamage et al (2020, cited in Reddy et al 2022) supports the view that the new challenge faced by educators was the integrity of assessments especially for students not physically proctored by invigilators. The findings from the questionnaires and interviews indicate that students were not enthusiastic about the invigilator app as they felt inadequately prepared to use it. Future research should focus on how to integrate the invigilator app in the module design stage.

Covid-19: New Normal Breeding Ground for Academic Mediocracy.

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Abstract

Covid-19: New Normal Breeding Ground for Academic Mediocracy From 2019 to the present day the world has been grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic. The origins now are well known with Wuhan in China being seen as the starting point and countries across the world in some way or the other being affected by this deadly pandemic. The high death rate and frightening rate of infection in the last 3 years has constrained health authorities the world over to call for social distancing, hand washing and the wearing of face masks to prevent the spread of the disease. Coupled with this are the lockdowns and the calls to stay at home that have forced Universities to limit face-to-face teaching and instead embark on new ways to deliver instruction. This sudden transition has not only resulted in an exponential increase in teaching being done online, but assessments are being conducted in this manner as well. This in turn has given rise to a concern that learning and teaching has become sub-standard. This case study assesses the performance of 150 MBA students at an international university. It critically examines the effects of the switch to on-line learning and assessments on learners who were previously part of a face-to-face classroom context.

Factors Influencing Plagiarism amongst Students at an Institution of Higher Learning: KwaZulu-Natal.

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Abstract

Plagiarism can be seen as a form of dishonesty and is a phenomenon that has been encountered more often in the classroom over the past few years with easier access to technology. Over the past decades, plagiarism has been classified as a multi-layer phenomenon of dishonesty in Higher Education. Plagiarism continues to be a leading concern within Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL). Student plagiarism is rampant practice and a significant problem within IHL. It affects their potential to be competent in their academics, and it also promotes laziness. According to Plagiarism Policy and Procedures at DUT for staff and students (2009), responsibility for developing an understanding of plagiarism lies with the university for students' academics. It puts their academic life at risk if caught committing the act of plagiarising. This can lead to being penalized in the task or even failing; in a worst-case scenario, suspension or academic exclusion following due process is instituted on the offender. Written falsification and literary theft in schools can be exceptionally demotivating for lecturers and students. Socialization, gender, and easy access to electronic information through the internet are some of the contributory factors driving plagiarism. In addition, students do not learn or gain anything from plagiarism; therefore robs them of their ability to be critical thinkers related to their academics. The research aimed to determine the factors influencing plagiarism amongst undergraduate students at an Institution of Higher Learning. A cross-sectional descriptive survey employing quantitative data collection methods including questionnaires were used. The study was conducted at a campus in the Midlands, and the target population were undergraduate students from their first year to their final year. One can conclude that student plagiarism is rampant and a primary concern in higher education. The author discusses the cultural values students use as justifications for plagiarizing and the more significant implications for higher education. The study showed that technological factors and peer pressure are the main reasons for plagiarism.

Understanding Academic Dishonesty in Teaching and Learning in Library and Information Studies Schools in South Africa: Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic.

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Abstract

The global COVID-19 pandemic has forced institutions of higher learning in South Africa to undertake teaching and assessment of students online as part of the endeavour halt the spread of the virus. This sudden transition brought with it some considerable challenges related to the violation of academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is not just a South African higher education issue, but also a global concern in academia. It is an issue of concern for those involved in teaching, research, and related academic activities, including students and academics. The onset of the pandemic meant that lecturers and students relied heavily on the use of Learning Management Systems solely for teaching and assessing student learning. Academic dishonesty became more pronounced as a result. The use of Turnitin, an Internet based plagiarism detection service has been useful in detecting and dealing with academic dishonesty. Focusing on students, this qualitative study used interviews to understand the reason for academic dishonesty by students during assessment from the perspective of faculty in Library and Information Studies (LIS) schools in South Africa. Insights from literature supplemented the interviews in proposing measures that can be implemented to curb academic dishonesty among students.

Keywords: Academic dishonesty, assessment, Covid-19, online teaching, South Africa

SUB-THEME 4: APPROACHES TO STUDENT SUPPORT: STRATEGIES, PRACTICES AND SCHOLARSHIP.

Decoloniality and Language are Intertwined.

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Abstract

Decoloniality discourse is void of substance if language is left out. When bringing up the topic of African languages, the common questions are, what is the currency of these languages in the labour market? Are these languages equipped enough to explain avant-garde science and technology constructions? These questions are very pertinent to the ordinary people. Those bold enough will in no uncertain terms insist that the exercise of developing these so-called previously marginalized languages is futile. Kwesi Kwaa Prah (2017:215) argues thus for those who have long been converted to the belief that African languages are crucial to African social and economic development, there is little need to argue that we need to swiftly and effectively enable our languages to develop scientific and technological capacity, rational, logical approaches, and analytical techniques. The real challenge is how to intellectualise African languages and bring them up to speed with the linguistic techniques of modernity and advanced contemporary thought. This paper looks at the interconnectedness between language and decoloniality. It also explores the role institutions of higher learning can play in shaping the language discourse in the country. It will also highlight alternative models that can be explored in order to fully intellectualize African languages: a case study of UKZN language policy and plan.

Keywords: Intellectualization, decoloniality and African languages.

WhatsApp as a Tool to Facilitate Continued Adjustment of First Time Entering Students into University.

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic forced universities into emergency remote learning, for universities situated in a country where data prices are high, network coverage is low and most students live in rural areas, this presented a unique set of problems. One of the issues is that traditionally Orientations were face-to-face for first-time entering students (FTENS) at universities, and they had to be moved online due to lockdown restrictions and the desire to save the academic year. For the university concerned, this presented an issue of access to the students due to their low digital literacy skills and infrastructure limitations. This presentation will report on how WhatsApp as a low-level access tool, having cheaper data bundles and allowing group creations allowed the student academic support units at a campus in a rural university an opportunity to access, orientate and send interventions to FTENS during the covid lockdown. The academic dimension of the academic dropout wheel (Author, 2018) was used to create interventions that seek to improve the feeling of belonging, academic satisfaction, integration, and performance, and when lockdowns eased to allow the promotion of extracurricular activities. The results of a quantitative questionnaire on 200 of the 2022 cohort of FTENS at the Komani campus showed that students felt more at ease, had a feeling of belonging and ownership of the university and they also knew where to ask for help. The paper then concludes with one of the key recommendations from lessons learned and proposes future use of the tool looking at officially announced upcoming features.

Reconceptualising 'Caring' in e-Tutor-Student Interactions During COVID-19 Pandemic in an ODL University in South Africa.

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Abstract

In South Africa and elsewhere in the world, the Covid 19 outbreak in 2020 and the subsequent lockdown regulations forced both academics and students to adapt to a new reality (Cicha, Rizun, Rutecka and Strzeleki, 2021). This situation catapulted relations in higher education into a spotlight. Of particular concern in this paper is how e-tutors in an ODL university in South Africa have enacted care in online interaction with the students during this period. There is available research focusing on online interaction, however, there is paucity when it comes to care cultivated by e-tutors on students to increase online interactions particularly during the Covid 19 pandemic. Through the lens of Relational Care, the paper seeks to reconceptualise care during e-tutor-student interaction in a mega South African ODL university. Data was collected through a survey completed by e-tutors of one of the English modules at this university. Content analysis was employed to make sense of the patterns and categories that emerged from the data. Preliminary findings point to a marked increase in downloading of resources while there was little or no interaction from the students. Future research should focus on how to manage student online interaction during crisis situations.

Enablers and Barriers of Entrepreneurship Education in South African Higher Education Institutions Post Covid-19.

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Abstract

South Africa is faced with the challenge of high graduate unemployment rate that is attributed to slow economic growth exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and lack of graduates with current relevant skills among many reasons. The current economic state limits creation of opportunities for formal employment while redundant or outdated South African Higher Education Institutions (HEI) curriculum is viewed as producing graduates with inadequate skills to enter the 4th Industrial Revolution labour market. Additionally, the majority of HEI students depend on limited government funding for university costs and their livelihood. On the other hand, entrepreneurship education is a life skill that equips one with strategic thinking, creativity, innovation and interpersonal skills. Hence, this paper explores whether the HEI have enabling ecosystem to teach entrepreneurship education that affords its community with practical knowledge to establish thriving businesses. The study employs the qualitative thematic literature review methodology in order to realize this aim. The elements of the ecosystem to be explored include unpacking the entrepreneurship education concept in HEI, how it is incorporated into the curriculum, the role of stakeholders, and the availability of conducive policies, training and entrepreneurship programs. It is found that the rollout of entrepreneurship education depends on university management commitment, desire for independence, a strong regulatory policy system and awareness/support programs such as start-up incubators. The paper reveals the benefits of entrepreneurship education such as producing multi-skilled graduates, revenue creation, alleviating reliance on government for employment and funding, access to tailored solutions for immediate communities, and sustainable business models with effective recovery strategies.

Thinking (and Teaching) Outside the Box: Academic Coaching as a Supportive Strategy for Higher Education Teaching and Learning in the Covid-19.

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Abstract

ERA When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in 2020, there was very little thought that this event would herald far-reaching consequences on a global scale. In South Africa, as elsewhere in the world, the pandemic wrought havoc on the economic and social lives of citizens. Very few key institutions were left unaffected, including Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the country. The sudden onslaught of the pandemic forced most, if not all, HEIs to respond and adapt immediately, mostly by shifting teaching and learning, as well as other activities, to the online environment. This shift created new challenges for teaching and learning in HEIs, as they now began to navigate uncharted territory. These challenges impacted on both students and academic staff. In this paper, I wish to shift the focus somewhat away from the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 era, to the opportunities. The pandemic has created an environment that foregrounds one opportunity in particular, namely academic coaching, and how this can be utilised as an “outside the box” strategy to enhance teaching and learning for both academic staff and students. The paper will emphasise how academic coaching can function as a key supportive strategy, both in terms of methodology and outcomes, that makes it ideal to successfully address the current challenges in HEIs.

Beyond Barriers and Resistance: An Integrated Online Support for Students' Academic Literacy During and Beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic.

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Abstract

Academic literacies are a core staple of academic and discipline-specific discourses. Students, therefore, having entered the university, are required to demonstrate a minimum proficiency in academic literacy as well as the potential to build upon effective academic writing discourse. Academic literacy is thus vital to students' academic access, performance, and success. The study discusses how the Durban University of Technology (DUT) writing centre has adapted its pedagogical practices during COVID-19 from face-to-face to online support. Writing centres play an important role in supporting students in the successful completion of their academic journeys through integrated writing initiatives. Within the writing centre space, this has meant reconceptualizing how tutors engage remotely with students through the development of feedback literacies strategies.

The focus of this article is on understanding tutors' experiences of transitioning from face-to-face to online consultations during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. This study reflects on the pertinent challenges and opportunities for the writing centres on how they strive to provide an online learning environment that enhances students' academic literacy experiences. Adopting a reflective approach, the study interrogates the need for the development of innovative techniques that enhance substantive remote tutoring experiences and academic literacy development for all students. Data analysed from this study indicates that tutors do reflect on pedagogical practices as well as the online learning environment, among other things. This study draws conclusions on the writing centres' preparedness and on the pertinent opportunities to substantively contribute towards the advancement of effective and accessible online writing support experiences. The relevance and significance of this study rest in its aptitude to positively impact the tutors' disposition toward an all-inclusive approach to remote academic literacy development.

Keywords: Academic literacies, Academic writing, Covid-19, Transitioning, Writing centres.

An Analysis of the UFS in Response to Supporting University Access Programmes Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic.

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Abstract

With the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the world came to a grinding standstill. The virus has redefined life in so many unprecedented ways. Academia has not been spared, and universities across the globe have come up with innovative approaches by shifting from contact to online classes. The important question therefore becomes; did the online classes cater for all the students across the political divide? This presentation zooms in from cases in the University Access Programmes to understand and deal with inequalities experiences by both staff and students. Inequalities, in this case, are not only confined to the capabilities of students accessing online classes but also economies of some of the universities in South Africa as a third world country. Does the third world have financial and enough human resource to develop and teach online classes? Moreover, the presentation looks into how the UAP was able to assist students during the pandemic. The idea of sustenance also comes into play. This study is framed in the context of the current COVID-19 environment and how it is affecting students and the academic landscape in particular. Academic cyberspace will drastically change the learning landscape and redefining teaching and learning methods. Consequently, this presentation aims to provide lessons learned and reflection on what can be improved. The emphasis is on how the UAP is responding and adapting to the COVID-19 scourge.

Expanding Student Support through the Development of LibGuides in a Blended Learning Context.

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Abstracts

This qualitative study provides insights on the intervention provided by the digital library at Walter Sisulu University through the development of LibGuides as a supporting intervention to postgraduate students who participated in the blended learning teaching and learning. Online lib-guides which are a cloud-based solution launched in 2007 are commonly used by libraries globally to provide information support to students. At WSU, the purpose of this intervention was to expand support to postgraduate students and to open up seamless access to electronic resources, and access to digital library-developed content. This study adopted the ADDIE model as a lens through which the development phase of Libguides was followed.

As the COVID-19 pandemic led to a total lockdown, Walter Sisulu University suspended the face to face classes and introduced a blended learning as a new mode of delivery. As blended learning modality was introduced, students were expected to participate fully in blended learning activities. Different student support departments such as Directorate of Learning and Teaching and Library and Information Services were expected to continue supporting students online, however, there were very limited online student support services offered by the library. Librarians at Walter Sisulu University had to continue providing support to all students during this time. Indeed, all librarians were trained in the development of libguides and they all developed and published LibGuides. Data was then collected on the use of LibGuides from the WSU platform, and the perceptions of students and librarians were collected through semi structured interviews. The findings show that LibGuides have a positive potential in supporting students in blended learning contexts.

Going Digital: Staff and Students' Reflections on the Transition from Contact Consultations to Online Learning: A Case Study of Technology.

Ntombizanele Tshali¹, Ntuthuko Mhlongo² and Siyanda Khanyile³

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic, which rocked South Africa and the world since 2020 resulted in prompt responses by the government. This meant implementing drastic regulations prohibiting gatherings, to curb the spread of the virus. Consequently, the Higher Education sector had to rethink their methods delivering of teaching and learning. It changed drastically, with the distinctive increase of e-learning, where teaching and learning was conducted remotely and on digital platforms.

Writing Centres had to restructure their methods of writing support to new online realities. The Writing Centre at Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) provides a unique case study in that it was established during the height of the pandemic. The student population at MUT is primarily made of IsiZulu speaking students whose quantile statistic is has not yet been determined (SER, 2022). Generally, any student entering the university space for the first time often finds it difficult to adjust to academic writing. Consequently, they lack confidence when approaching their written assessments. In response to this disposition, the Writing Centre staff fundamentally apply a student-centred approach to their consultations as it is widely acknowledged that it builds assertiveness amongst students. However, online learning resulted by the pandemic, made it difficult to carry out the traditional methods of student support. Through the reflections made by MUT's Writing Centre staff and students this paper responds to the conference's sub-theme -Approaches to student support: strategies, practices and scholarship. It seeks to assess the practicality of traditional philosophical approaches. Fundamentally it argues that while traditional method of teaching can also migrate to online platforms, there is a need to buttress them with more nascent approaches.

Language Consultants' Notions of Online Support to Clients: A Case Study of the University of Limpopo' Centre for Academic Excellence, Reading and Writing Centre.

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has left Universities all over the world faced with uncertainty and challenges; and student support programmes in higher education institutions have not been spared. As the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the Reading & Writing Centre as one of the student support programmes at the Centre for Academic Excellence (CAE) in the University of Limpopo moved the previously in-person consultations and reviews to online methods in June 2020. As with other student support programmes in the University of Limpopo, Reading and Writing Centre (RWC) was forced to reconsider the way we offered support to the students. The centre introduced new ways of working online to Language consultants (LCs) and clients. Reviewing and giving consultations online requires LCs and clients alike to be engaged and purposeful. In this study, we want to understand LCs notions of contribution, support and assistance to clients online. While the pandemic is likely to have effects that will be felt for years to come, it is important to remember that LCs are incredibly adept at finding ways to adapt and thrive. Thus, instead of waiting and hoping for LCs to seek out needed support on their own, CAE must take a more proactive approach to support LCs requirements in supporting clients to minimize their risk of experiencing issues that could lead to attrition. If there is a positive aspect in the COVID-19 cloud, it may be that the pandemic has increased the awareness of student support programmes in Universities that their response to the 'new normal' must include a more holistic view of student assistants' preparedness for supporting students in higher education. We recognize the possible ways RWC through the lense of LCs can effectively integrate positivity into the reviewing and consultation process, in order to provide better LCs outcomes. Finally, we will also provide recommendations and solutions that Academic Development Practitioners can implement to maintain LCs enthusiasm to provide support to clients as well as excelling in their own studies.

Keywords: Language consultants' support, online platforms, student success.

Perceptions of Students Regarding the Support Received During Covid-19: A Case Study of one South African Rural University.

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Abstract

The outbreak of COVID-19 and lockdown of all activities forced the education systems across the world and particularly in South Africa to change the mode of teaching from face-to-face to online. This rapid shift has brought about many changes in all sectors, especially in the field of education. Universities across South Africa particularly contact institutions, were affected and enforced lockdown that extremely prevent face-to-face interaction of teachers in the classroom and students. In the absence of face-to-face teaching and on-site student support, computer-based learning emerged as a way to substitute for offline teaching and students' support. In contrast to such background, it is relevant to investigate students' perceptions regarding the support received during Covid-19. The aim of this paper is to report on students' perceptions about the effectiveness of the support received during the COVID-19 pandemic and their readiness for Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) adopted by the University. Data were obtained during a pilot study involving 125 students from various levels on one campus of the institution; using an online survey with a standard Likert scale to determine the extent to which students were satisfied with the quality of support received. The results show that most participants agreed or strongly agreed that the support received was adequate. However, issues such as connectivity, data, lack of proper devices as well as personal challenges were raised as challenges. To mitigate these challenges, the institution put in place strategies in each Faculty to respond to students' queries. This paper has implications to policymakers in relation to student support.

Keywords: E-learning, COVID-19, Students support, Teaching, and learning.

Language Consultants' Notions of Online Support to Clients: A Case Study of the University of Limpopo' Centre for Academic Excellence, Reading and Writing Centre.

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has left Universities all over the world faced with uncertainty and challenges; and student support programmes in higher education institutions have not been spared. As the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the Reading & Writing Centre as one of the student support programmes at the Centre for Academic Excellence (CAE) in the University of Limpopo moved the previously in-person consultations and reviews to online methods in June 2020. As with other student support programmes in the University of Limpopo, Reading and Writing Centre (RWC) was forced to reconsider the way we offered support to the students. The centre introduced new ways of working online to Language consultants (LCs) and clients. Reviewing and giving consultations online requires LCs and clients alike to be engaged and purposeful. In this study, we want to understand LCs notions of contribution, support and assistance to clients online. While the pandemic is likely to have effects that will be felt for years to come, it is important to remember that LCs are incredibly adept at finding ways to adapt and thrive. Thus, instead of waiting and hoping for LCs to seek out needed support on their own, CAE must take a more proactive approach to support LCs requirements in supporting clients to minimize their risk of experiencing issues that could lead to attrition. If there is a positive aspect in the COVID-19 cloud, it may be that the pandemic has increased the awareness of student support programmes in Universities that their response to the 'new normal' must include a more holistic view of student assistants' preparedness for supporting students in higher education. We recognize the possible ways RWC through the lense of LCs can effectively integrate positivity into the reviewing and consultation process, in order to provide better LCs outcomes. Finally, we will also provide recommendations and solutions that Academic Development Practitioners can implement to maintain LCs enthusiasm to provide support to clients as well as excelling in their own studies.

Keywords: Language consultants' support, online platforms, student success.

Legitimation Code Theory as a Lens for Student Academic Support at Mangosuthu University of Technology.

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Abstract

This paper argues that there is likely confinement of most of us in academia in dominant understandings associated with teaching, learning and language to the extent that the practises, beliefs, and values that underpin those practises, privileged in these discourses become 'normalised' and 'naturalised'. What seems obvious and becomes normalised is the idea that when students fail is because they have an English language problem and so, the students' support programmes are likely to be conceptualised on the basis of 'fixing' students language problem. We argue in this paper that when academic support adepts provide students support should see beyond what seems normal, the idea of 'fixing' students language problems, particularly at a university of technology. This could be realized when academic support adepts work collaboratively with disciplinary experts as they provide student academic support. To do this work, we argue for Legitimation Code Theory and Academic Literacies Approach to students' academic support at Mangosuthu University of Technology. The theoretical framework helps us realise that disciplines are structured and specialised differently and so, when offering students' academic support, it is possible to see that we need to draw on the structural knowledge of the discipline being supported. We refer to data that have been generated through email correspondences between academic support staff and disciplinary experts. Data shows enablements and constraints in drawing on the structure of knowledge of the discipline when providing student support initiatives, thus, enabling or constraining epistemological access. The current data is related to the disciplines of chemistry and community extension, both in the natural sciences. Key words – Academic literacies, Legitimation Code Theory, academic student support.

SUB-THEME 5: LECTURERS' EXPERIENCES WITH DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS.

An Analysis of Challenges Faced by Academics During the Transition from Face-To-Face Learning to Online Learning: A case of COVID-19 in KwaZulu-Natal.

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has become a critical challenge to all sectors, including the higher education sector. Due to COVID-19 universities across different countries have experienced an unprecedented transition from contact learning (face-to-face) to multiple forms of online education. Thus, this study attempts to critically analyze the challenges that academics experienced as a result of COVID-19. This study seeks to critically analyze the challenges experienced by academics during the transition from face-to-face learning to online education due to COVID-19. Data was collected from 200 randomly selected academics from the public universities in KwaZulu-Natal, using a quantitative research approach. Data was collected through the use of questionnaires. The data was then analyzed using SPSS. The findings revealed that most academics experienced much higher workloads and stress with online learning than in face-to-face learning. Moreover, the respondents revealed that they learned the need for good planning and adaptability. The research was limited to public universities in the KwaZulu-Natal province; thus, the findings cannot be generalized. This study contributes to the literature on online learning, by analyzing the challenges that academics faced during the transition from contact to online learning. This study also provides strategies that can be utilized by academics to engage students in online learning, to ensure that they are equipped with the necessary graduate attributes. Based on the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that institutions must offer better online learning instructional design training as part of long-term professional development for institutions.

Keywords: COVID-19, online teaching, contact or face-to-face education, higher education, technology.

Blended Learning in Physical Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case Study of South African Students.

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Abstract

The novel coronavirus virus (COVID-19) epidemic has swept the world, with the World Health Organization defining it as a global pandemic on March 11, 2020. This in turn has affected the approaches and methods used in education throughout the world. According to United Nations report, by the time of mid-April 2020, 94% of learners in more than 200 countries around the world have been affected, and 1.58 billion students from pre-school to higher education are affected. In response to increased learning needs regarding infection prevention, the Ministry of Education has also provided cloud educational resources and private online learning resources, platforms, and tools to schools at some levels to encourage teachers and students to make effective use of digital resources. Although the government provides abundant teaching resources, the implementation of distance teaching in college physical education still faced with many problems, such as the shortage of course resources, the lack of information literacy of teachers, the difficulty in implementing conventional teaching plans online, the limited conditions for students to exercise at home, and the doubts about online physical education. Therefore, this study proposes a new teaching method, and studies, analyzes and discusses this method. The method of experimental design was adopted in this study to divide the students into two groups: blended learning group (synchronous and asynchronous) and single type learning group (synchronous). The results show that blended learning students perform better than single type learning students in all these aspects, which proves the practicability and effectiveness of the proposed method.

Keywords: blended learning, distance learning education, physical education, COVID-19 pandemic.

Evaluation of Science Foundation Lecturers' Experiences with Digital Assessments and Continuity of Technology as the New Norm in the Higher Education.

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Abstract

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected the higher education sector in South Africa. There is now a major move towards virtualizing everything and the COVID-19 crisis compels every individual to move in that direction. However, academics and students' preparedness and competences have been considered a major conundrum with respect to the integration of online learning in the classroom. The purpose of this paper is to examine the academics' perspectives towards a blend of metaverse in the higher education sector in the post COVID-19 at one of the South African rural universities. A survey was administered in 2022 to ten (10) academics and four (4) E-learning practitioners to solicit their perceptions regarding the use of online learning and contact classes in the post pandemic era. Qualitative research design was employed to obtain descriptive and numerical representation of data. Furthermore, the case study research method was used to comprehend the challenges encountered in a rural based university in Limpopo Province. The findings of this study elucidated that the competences and the use of Learning Management Systems among academics seems to have deteriorated due to the adjustments in COVID-19 rules and regulations. Participants indicated that there is resistance to adopt new methods that are designed for new realities. Some indicated that online education is not feasible for areas where there is limited connectivity. Moreover, participants report work-related stress, digital fatigue, a negative impact on work-life balance, and significant concerns over potential longer-term changes to academia as a result of the pandemic. This paper recommends that the lack of access to devices should not be used as a stumbling block to consider e-learning as a viable option to continue with education. The connectivity challenge in rural areas should not be used as a reason to ignore the significant potential of e-learning as an enabler to access and advancing education.

Keywords: Pedagogy; New technology; Learning Management Systems, Technophilia; COVID-19.

Baptism in fire, Lecturer's experience with digital assessment: a case study of University of Limpopo.

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Abstract

During the COVID-19 pandemic, academic institutions promptly shifted all educational activities to the e-learning format. The shift was to rescue the academic year, which saw the lecturers faced with baptism in fire. The University of Limpopo adopted online teaching mode as an interactive educational strategy to stand for the traditional face to face. The University shifted into digitalised materials within a short space of time, which was a forced action without any preparation and sufficient training. Blackboard was adopted as a platform to conduct educational sessions including lectures, tutorials, and assessment. Online formative assessments, through the Blackboard, are also performed. This study aims to explore challenges faced by the lecturers in the implementation of digital assessment at the University of Limpopo. The present study will describe the procedures performed to facilitate the urgent transition to e-learning and online assessment during the COVID-19 pandemic and to highlight its challenges, the benefits and impact on student and staff satisfaction and performance. It also aimed to compare the scores of students during both face-to-face and online sessions, and to explore the challenges of this experience to sustain its future implementation post the COVID-19 pandemic. This study will present problems that are encountered by lecturers concerning the online assessment. The target population will be 16 lecturers from all four faculties who will be selected through purposive sampling to participate in this study. The study will adopt a qualitative research approach wherein the data will be collected through semi-structured interviews and then analysed thematically.

The importance of the study will help the lecturers in the use of the online facilities for digital assessment. It is hoped that the findings will be useful to the university lecturers and the support staff in the planning and improvement of online assessment.

Keywords: Digital assessment, e-learning, teaching and learning.

Lecturers' Experiences with Digital Assessments.

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Abstract

The primary purpose of an assessment in pedagogy is to provide data and revise planned instructions. As the producers of skilled labor for the private sector, higher education institutions need to facilitate the transformation of assessments focused on developing 21st-century skills competencies in students. In preparing for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, higher education institutions are concerned about fresh graduates not being adequately skilled for the workplace. The gap can lead to unemployment and a shortage of skilled labor. This research is designed to understand the challenges in digital assessments to address the 21st-century skills gap. Based on an epistemological belief through a social constructivist interpretive framework, a case study approach is used to construct the reality shaped by the lecturers' experiences. Based on purposeful sampling, two (2) business lecturers with over five (5) years of teaching experience, and familiarity with the traditional teaching methods were selected from Elangeni TVET College. Data will be collected using semi-structured interviews, document reviews, and audio-visual materials. A data analysis strategy of reducing codes to themes and identifying patterned regularities will be used to produce a written report. The purpose of the study is to establish if there are any challenges faced by lecturers in digital assessments to develop 21st-century skills. The recommendation is for assessments to be transformed based on private-sector skill needs to keep up with the changing work skills demands of Industry Fourth Industrial Revolution. Continuous initiatives in shared value partnerships with the private sector will ensure that the development of 21st century skills remains relevant to the needs the skills requirements.

Keywords: Online Assessment, Higher Education, fourth industrial revolution.

Self-Assessment Intervention for Students at Risk.

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Abstract

The discourse on Student Risk has largely focussed on identification and resource-intensive intervention strategies. On the other hand, it is possible with far fewer resources to promote student self-study and self-diagnosis to ameliorate academic under-performance by leveraging automation. In this study, the creation of “meta-questions” is proposed as a means of generating large volumes of assessment content with relatively low effort by its creators. In particular, these meta-questions also encode solutions memos which translate the activity to being an actively formative aspect of learning. The generated content is then administered as training material and regular testing before and after reveals the effectiveness of the method.

The approach is applied in the teaching of chemical engineering fundamentals at UKZN and the results analysed for the level of significance of the difference. It is further proposed that engagement be related to the identification of students being at risk, and a suitable framework illustrated. Finally, a model for promoting student creation of assessment content is outlined.

Moving from Face to Face to Completely Online Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Institutions: Lessons Learnt from COVID-19 Restrictions.

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Abstract

The global COVID-19 pandemic brought changes in teaching and learning across the globe. Institutions of higher learning that practiced face to face learning were obliged to switch to online mode of teaching and learning. This has not happened without considerable challenges. Reaching students for online classes attendance posed as one of challenges encountered in rural settings. This qualitative study used structured interviews to collect data from lecturers in two selected universities in South Africa. Telephone interviews were conducted with the participants. To ensure anonymity of the participants, the participants were labelled Participants as and Participant Bs from the two institutions of higher learning. The study revealed that the migration from face-to-face teaching and learning posed several threats such as speedy adaptation to the use of technology in teaching and learning which included updating information for students online. Poor classes attendance on the side of students also impacted the pass rate. Assessments were also affected due to lack of computers for other students. Poor communication between lecturers and students was also experienced due to poor internet access. This study proposes model for online teaching and learning regardless of covid 19. The study recommends that all universities adapt to the use of internet for teaching and learning especially in this technological era, 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR). Though access to internet poses several challenges for rural dwellers, it is easier to reach to all students all at once by uploading leaning materials on Learning Management Systems (LMS).

Keywords: Higher education; Learning; Rural areas; South Africa; Teaching, Universities.

Lecturers' Reflections on the Use of WhatsApp Platform: Implication for Teaching and Learning.

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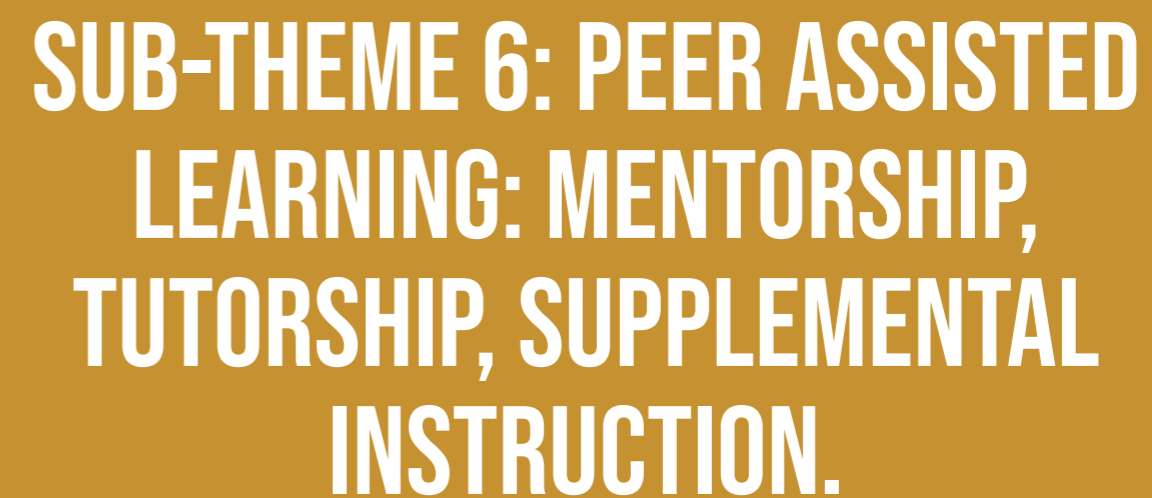
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Abstract

The outbreak of the corona virus in 2019 has led most institutions of education and universities in particular across the globe to migrate from the traditional face to face tuition to online. The most common online platform used by students and lecturers in developing countries was the WhatsApp. Whilst a lot of studies were done on the perceptions and experiences of using WhatsApp on teaching /learning, a few studies had focused on the implication and impact of lecturers' experiences on the WhatsApp platform. The current study thus, explored how lecturers reacted to their own WhatsApp presentations and the effect thereof. A qualitative approach was used as it permitted descriptive responses from naturalistic context. Ten lecturers purposively selected from a selected state university in Zimbabwe, responded to semi-structured interviews on their perceptions with regard to their experiences with the WhatsApp teaching/ learning platform. Data from the lecturers were presented and analysed in themes. The findings revealed that most lecturers were dismayed to establish that the platform did not only provide a teaching/learning platform for learners but for lecturers also. The reflections on WhatsApp permitted lecturers to improve on their presentation shortcomings. Thus, the study recommends that lecturers should have time to reflect on the lectures they will have conducted.

Keywords: Online learning; WhatsApp platform; reflections; teaching and learning.



**SUB-THEME 6: PEER ASSISTED
LEARNING: MENTORSHIP,
TUTORSHIP, SUPPLEMENTAL
INSTRUCTION.**

Using a design-based research approach for a supplementary instruction programme: A pedagogical intervention during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Abstract

The study focused on the implementation of supplementary instruction as a suitable and effective pedagogical intervention for assisting at-risk students enrolled in an Advanced Research Methodology core course in one of the South African higher education institutions (HEIs). Supplementary instruction (SI) has been purported to be an effective technique for assisting at-risk students undertaking high-risk core modules. The educational challenge of at-risk students in higher education has been worsened by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic where high-risk core modules implementing e-learning posed serious challenges for at-risk students thereby negatively affecting pass rates and throughput. The design-based research (DBR) approach was used to guide the design of the intervention and research its effectiveness. The paper reports on the design principles that yielded these results. After one cycle of DBR, it was established that SI had a positive impact on the pass rates of this particular course. The paper argues that the use of the proposed designed principles in SI interventions has the potential to increase higher mean grades, lower failure and withdrawal rates, and higher retention rates of students. However, this study recommends that further iterations must be undertaken to refine design principles for an SI programme of this nature. The pedagogical significance of the current study in the prevailing circumstances and post COVID-19 pandemic is implementing a robust SI intervention in all core modules at the University of Technology.

Attributes of First Year Students Who Participated in a Peer-Mentored Transition Programme during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Lessons Learned

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Abstract

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the country's national lockdown, the 2021 cohort of first year students entered the university environment virtually, a reality they did not envisage. Unfamiliarity with the higher education context added new challenges to first year students' university transition. These students to date have never physically been on campus, and have had no face-to-face contact with lecturers and peers. This presentation focuses on a cohort of first year students that joined the institutional First Year Transition Programme (FYTP) in 2021. The focus of the FYTP is to provide first year students with the necessary guidance, support, and motivation so as to ensure that they achieve a successful university transition. Peers as mentors are key to the success of the programme. The FYTP is not mandatory and first year students are invited to join. A total of 967 first year students signed up for the programme in 2021 with 542 students who stayed on for the duration of the academic year. Studies reveal that first year students that participate in peer-mentored programmes are most likely to succeed with first year university transition and make sense of their new and complicated university reality. Therefore gaining a deeper understanding of the psyche of students' who volunteer to participate in the peer-mentored programmes will assist in providing targeted support to ensure first year students' needs are met. This presentation takes a closer look at who are these students that participated in the peer-mentored programme, where they come from, what challenges were experienced, and how the programme supported their needs. Qualitative data collected from 542 mentees' feedback surveys form the basis of this presentation. The findings indicate that the peer-mentored programme helped in students' first year university transition, which created a sense of belonging and connectedness to the institution during their virtual and remote engagements with staff and peers. However, a key and unexpected finding indicated that the non-mandatory design of the programme runs the risk of not supporting the students that need the support the most. In this regard, the transition programme design needs to also be intentional and assertive in providing targeted support to students identified as "at-risk" of dropping out in the first year of university.

Keywords: First Year Experience, Transition Programmes, Mentors, Peer Mentorship

Sustainable Leadership is Everybody's Business: The Influence of Stakeholder's Collaboration in The South African Rural Schools.

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Abstract

Sustainable leadership depends on the stakeholder's involvement in schools and the ability of leaders to influence the stakeholders. Research indicates that in schools and through collaboration among stakeholders there are gains such as shared knowledge, team development and collaborative leadership strategies enhancing the school culture. However, there seem to be a challenge about the influence of stakeholders' collaboration for sustainable leadership in the rural secondary schools in South Africa. This paper aims to establish how the stakeholders' collaboration influence sustainable leadership in selected South African schools. The paper is guided by collaborative leadership as a theoretical framework, and Participatory Action Research design involving three public rural schools. The participants were the three school leaders, three teachers in the school management team (SMT), three post level one teachers, six learners, three parents in the school governing body (SGB), three community members within the school community. Data were analysed thematically. The findings revealed that every stakeholder's involvement is a key determinant in promoting sustainable leadership. The findings also showed that collaborative decision-making was a significant strategy. Moreover, the active involvement of parents in their children's academic life was identified as a positive influencer. The paper concludes that to enhance sustainable leadership in the rural secondary schools, active participation of all the stakeholders need to be recognised and acknowledged as a going concern.

Keywords: Collaboration, Rural schools, Sustainable leadership, Stakeholders, South Africa

A Facilitator's Reflection on Problem-Based Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic.

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in human history. Social distancing and restrictive movement policies have significantly disturbed traditional educational practices. Several schools, colleges and universities had to discontinue face-to-face teachings, providing an opportunity to pave the way for introducing digital learning. Transitioning from traditional face-to-face learning to online learning was an entirely different experience for the learners, lecturers, tutors, facilitators, and mentors. Schön reflective learning theory is an educational theory, that allows for a retrospective recall of information to improve practice to expert level. This paper draws from Schön's theory to reflect on my own experiences in implementing problem-based learning as a student-centered pedagogical approach. In this paper I describe how I adapted my instructional facilitation to the circumstances surrounding the coronavirus pandemic and highlight the lessons learnt during this abrupt change to virtual learning.

The Effectiveness of the Online Tutorship Program on First-Year IT Students: Case of a University of Technology.

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Abstract

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak most governments imposed nation-wide lockdowns which resulted in the closure of schools. Most Universities made use of online learning and blended learning approaches for tutorship programs to mitigate the possibility of student failure. This study analyses the effectiveness of the online tutorship program on first year students at a University of Technology in South Africa between the years 2020-2022. An online google form was distributed to IT students through WhatsApp and Email. A total of 69 responses were received from students who had successfully participated in the tutorship program. A total of 68% of the students indicated that they come from rural areas which then affected their internet access due to the lack of electricity amongst other factors. A typical South African rural area has numerous resource limitations. In addition, rural lifestyle is generally not conducive to learning in general. This background affected a lot of students. Consequently, a lot of students experienced poor internet access which affected their participation in class. Several students reported mental conditions such as depression, unfavourable study conditions and being in remote areas that affected their results and participation. Tutorship and mentorship generally work well if there is a personal connection between the mentor and the mentee. In the case of online mentorship, some students reported that it was awkward to connect with someone that they had never seen in person. This lack of social connection resulted in the program not being effective. However, students that adopted the blended approach towards the program produced phenomenal results in their modules which is a great indication that the blended learning approach produces better results compared to online learning.

Keywords: Tutorship, Covid-19, Lockdown, Online learning, effectiveness.

SUB-THEME 7: STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE DATA

An Exploration of Social Sciences Students' Views of Remote Teaching and Learning.

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Abstract

This is a phenomenological case-study foregrounding the experiences and perceptions of university students pertaining to remote teaching and learning during the course of the COVID-19 global pandemic. To adapt to the new normal, where people had to work from home to adhere to the social distancing regulations, both the departments of Basic Education and Higher Education had to find ways to salvage what was left of the academic year in the mist of the pandemic. This required the need to revise teaching and learning to accommodate the sudden transitions as a result of COVID-19 outbreak. Remote teaching and learning was then introduced and implemented in South African higher institutions of learning. Through the interpretivist paradigm, which maintains that people have different understanding and interpretations of their own experiences and the world around them, and following the qualitative approach to research and phenomenology as the methodology guiding this study, focused group interviews, guided by set questions, were conducted to explore how twenty Social Sciences student have experienced remote teaching and learning. This paper indicates that Social Sciences students are experiencing remote teaching and learning both negatively and positively. Although negative experiences are predominant, there are factors that contributed to students rating remote teaching as positive.

The Effects of COVID-19 on the Learning and Academic Performance of Students Residing in Private Accommodation.

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Abstract

As in any other sector, the COVID-19 pandemic affected education in many ways. Government actions have followed a common goal of reducing the spread of coronavirus by introducing measures limiting social contact. Many countries suspended face-to-face teaching and introduced virtual learning. A lack of proper and conducive infrastructure such as electricity and internet connections, coupled with safety concerns, are key reasons for South African students to prefer dedicated student accommodation premises. student housing plays an integral part in facilitating the success and graduation of tertiary education students. This study, through a qualitative research design, investigated the effect of Covid 19 on students and the living and learning spaces at a selected university in KZN, South Africa. Two hundred students were interviewed. The results revealed that the living and learning spaces had been significantly transformed by the Covid 19 pandemic. The operations of these spaces had been compelled to change in order to comply with the Covid 19 regulations, such that student learning was shifted from face-to-face to online learning. This meant more time spent indoors, stricter measures now in place. The study also noted that even after the pandemic, things will still take time to get back to normal. This article concludes that Covid 19 has had a huge effect on the living and learning spaces as well as students at the selected university and that both students and staff should play their roles effectively to ensure that everyone remains safe. Some students stated that their stress levels were elevated in relation to coping with the transformation that was taking place in the living and learning spaces. The issue of insufficient resources in their places of residence was also noted, where most students did not have relevant or sufficient resources, which made it hard for them to cope with the transformation taking place due to virtual learning as a result of Covid-19.

Key Indicators Informing Students' Perceptions on their Academic Performance During the COVID-19 Pandemic.

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Abstract

The first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic saw many institutions drastically re-shape their delivery of the academic project. Teaching, learning and assessment moved onto the online platform in a rushed manner and became the main mode of programme delivery and student engagement. This paper highlights the actions taken by the institution in supporting staff and students in the transition to online learning, teaching and engagement. It further highlights key indicators which influenced how students perceived their academic performance during the transition to online learning. Quantitative data collected highlight that the following indicators: regular communications via email, the online training workshops, support from tutors, mentors, lecturers and physio-social support services gave students the perceived notion that they would stay and success in their studies. The students' academic performance data supported this notion, which forced the university to re-look at student support through new lens. The holistic support provided by the institution ignited in the students a sense of belonging, resilience and commitment to their studies. The findings from the data provided the basis for the institution to re-invent their academic policies to include a more holistic approach to learning, teaching and student success. Three new institutional policies that were evidence-based and developed during the COVID-19 pandemic experience include: Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision (FLTP) Policy 2021, Assessment Policy 2021, and a Framework on Curriculum Transformation and Renew. These policies place the student at the centre of the university focus while taking place, space and context into account to enhance student performance and ensure student success.

Detecting at-Risk Students in an Animal Science Module with Performance Data Mining (Test 1 and 2) from two Different Cohorts in a Rural-Based University.

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Abstract

Students' dropout, which is often reflected as at-risk students remains a major problem in Higher Education worldwide not excluding South Africa. Dropout has been reported to be highest among first year students but continue to increase throughout the degree programme. It was worsened by the global pandemic COVID-19. Although rural-based Universities have been cited by most authors to suffer most. These dropouts have major impacts on the institution, personal and society. Numerous factors have been associated with student's dropout such as first-generation student pressure, choosing the wrong institution and course, social status at the institution, academic readiness, financial and family commitments and poor academic support. A couple of researchers have also established that early identification of potential at-risk students with mitigation strategies can decrease dropout. Test-1 (T1) has often been used for quick identification but this study interns to investigate the potential of Test2 (T2) to predict dropout. The aim of this study was to reflect on the role of Test T1 and T2 in predicting at-risk students (failing exam or module) in an Applied Animal Nutrition module at a rural-based University. A total of 51 students belonging to cohort-1 (23) and cohort-2 (28) participated in the study for 14 weeks. A hybrid mode of lecture (half online and the other face-to-face) was adopted after the relieved of COVID-19 pandemic. A double blinded study was used to avoid biasing the study. The results from T1 and T2 predicted that 19.6% and 35.3% of students were at-risk to fail their exams, respectively. The exam results (49% failed) showed that T1 and T2 were able to predict only 15.7% and 29.4% respectively. However, T2 was 15.5% more accurate in predicting at-risk students than T1. It was also noticed that cohort-1 performed better than cohort-2.

Reimagining the Success Discourse in a Higher Education Institution: Undergraduate Student Success

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Abstract

South African universities enhance student success by focusing more on the provision of remedial support to the undergraduate students deemed as 'at-risk' of meeting progression, and or completion requirements. Inadvertently, little or no support is being paid to students who are on course to graduate in record time, several with cum laude or summa cum laude potential. As such, the student success discourse becomes informed by individual students' weaknesses rather than students' strengths. Therefore, this qualitative case study is an integral part of a project being conducted in the School of Education which aims to enhance high performing students' self-authorship and performance at full potential. Focus group and individual questionnaires are used to collect the data from 10 participants who were purposively and conveniently selected from a cohort of 1000 high performing undergraduate students. The constructivist theoretical lens was used to guide the study while thematic analysis was used to interpret the findings. Findings suggest that the student success traits of high performing students are learnable, and proactive student support for high performance can detract from a need for current reactive remedial support practices. Therefore this study argues for a holistic student success support discourse to keep all students on track and performing at full potential.

An Assessment on the Effect of COVID-19 Induced E-Learning on Students' Academic Performance. A Case of a Higher Learning Institution in Zimbabwe.

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Abstract

The main objective of the research was to assess the effects of COVID-induced e-learning on students' academic performance. The university was now using blended learning, therefore, the researcher wanted to find out the effect of e-learning on students' performance on higher learning institutions. The research adopted pragmatism research philosophy, mixed method research approach and a case study research design. Questionnaires were distributed to the participants. Furthermore, the researcher also interviewed lecturers from different departments. Document analysis was also used to gather more data from the faculty minutes as from 2019 to 2021. Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS version twenty-three and qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis and was presented in tables, graphs and pie charts. The study revealed that some of the factors affect the performance of students include library facilities, lecture rooms, late payment of / failure to pay school fees by their parents and relatives and it affects their self-confidence. It was also revealed that the challenges faced by the students included that e-learning was never properly implemented, the university looks more inclined toward the success of completion of semesters while ignoring and neglecting students' plight of fully grasping all the concepts. Furthermore, the study also revealed that some students come from penurious backgrounds and cannot afford ICT gadgets and data to access the internet. The technological infrastructure in those areas/ regions is a huge challenge in terms of network and frequent power cuts. The study also revealed that the WhatsApp platform did not play a bigger role in improving students' performance during the COVID-19 pandemic and there is a weak relationship between google meet and students' performance meaning that google meet also does not play any role in students' performance. Last but not least document analysis revealed that the performance rate of students from all the departments under the faculty of commerce declined from July 2020 to December 2021. The researcher recommended that the university should strive to purchase data for students so that they can assess learning material. Furthermore, the study recommended that the government must intervene in times like this to give support to those students who are underprivileged. Parents or guidance should find ways to financially support the students in terms of data bundles and ICT gadgets such as smartphones and laptops.

Keywords: Students' academic performance, E-learning, COVID 19.

SUB-THEME 8: STUDENT AND STAFF MENTAL HEALTH

The Importance of Social Connectivity towards Collaborative Teaching and Learning: A Case Study from the University of Venda.

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Abstract

Globally COVID-19 hit all sectors including higher education where there was a shutdown and uncertainty of academic continuity. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and changes to the structure of schooling is being investigated through student experiences, academic performance and student well-being amongst other factors. This study intends to answer how COVID-19 affected students' social well-being. COVID-19 reversed the usual traditional social connections that are normally created between lecturers and students like the casual interactions during consultation times, pre-class engagements, group collaborations and class discussions. These social connections are crucial for student development, retention, inclusion, and diversity in the teaching and learning fraternity. The rationale is to get first-hand experience on the impact and effects of COVID and the changes that have come with the pandemic on student well-being. A questionnaire will be deployed to university students addressing social connectivity as a measure of student well-being amid COVID-19. The study will enhance knowledge on the gaps surrounding students' social connectivity amid the pandemic. Furthermore, the results of this study will address whether traditional students' collaboration is more considerable than online students' collaboration.

Keywords: Well-being, social connection, connectivism.

Mind Matters: Stress, Depression, and Substance Use in a Student Cohort during the COVID-19 Pandemic and Restrictions.

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic caused profound fear and unpredictability, impacting millions of young people's psychological well-being and mental health. Although multiple studies have established a relationship between mental health-related issues and the pandemic, very few studies have examined the risks in young adults within the South African context. Therefore, this study explores the association between COVID-19-related stress, depression and substance use in university students. An online survey was conducted on a convenient sample of 190 university students in South Africa to assess the student's perception of the impact of the pandemic on their mental health. Through a multiple regression analysis, the study investigated whether the burden from the pandemic has impacted stress, anxiety disorders, depressive symptoms, substance use and psychiatric severities in students. Results revealed that 81% of the sample students reported high-stress levels, mood changes and substance use. Linear regression analysis showed higher risks of psychological pandemic-related distress and depressive symptoms for the female students. Findings underscore that disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic are associated with higher distress and anxiety, a motivation for substance use.

Reflections on the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Psychological Well-Being of Staff and Students in a South African University.

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Abstract

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated hard lockdowns globally. The universities had to make an unprecedented decision for students to abruptly cease their curricular activities and vacate their residence with immediate effect. The surge in COVID-19 cases and deaths led to paranoia and anxiety amongst university students and staff. For academics, this meant a fast transition in the delivery of the curricular content from traditional face-to-face to virtual platforms. The university has students from diverse backgrounds. Some students are from the rural and peri-urban areas of the country where connectivity remains a formidable challenge. University students and staff are at risk of psychological distress in the case of traumatic events. The evolution of the pandemic is still uncertain and may have long-term effects on mental health. I reflect using the simplified reflective theory by Boud's triangular reflection theory which focuses on experience, reflection, and learning. Boud's asserts that by ignoring the impact of emotion, learning from reflection may be an incomplete process. This paper gives a personal retrospective narrative of the psychological challenges that were induced by this public health care emergency to university personnel and students.

The Role of Religious Societies in Academic Performance.

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Abstract

The University under study provides such opportunity to student within the campus and off-campus as part of student university integration. However, little is known about how participating in student societies contribute in student academic progress particularly religious societies. The role of religion has been studied in many aspects of human existence. It is undoubtable, this is one of the most important aspects of human existence. This research, therefore, aim to understand the role of religious structures in the student academic progress. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative research approach, 20 participants were selected randomly from those who actively participate in religious activities. The result show that the religious societies play an important role on academic progress of student. The study further reveals a strong relationship between spiritual life of student and academic performance. Majority of students indicated that their participation in the religious societies help them to avoid many destructive activities that may negatively affect their academic success. The study also discovered on top of taking care of the spiritual wellbeing of students, most religious societies also strive for good academic performance among their members. In essence, most of them have structures that assist in the academic progression of students.



SUB-THEME 9: QUALITY OF GRADUATES

COVID-19, Online Learning and Historically Disadvantaged Universities: The Inequality in South Africa's Higher Education.

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Abstract

Each year, hundreds of thousands of students enroll to study at South Africa's universities. Of the 60% of black African students who survive the first year, only 15% will ultimately graduate. The post-apartheid educational system is not founded on what the poor and marginalized need. Education is unequal at all levels in South Africa. There is deepening racial segregation at schools and universities. Higher education is increasingly racially stratified, and it is particularly apparent in the concentration of black and colored students at historically disadvantaged universities. When the COVID-19 pandemic forced the government to shut down educational institutions, there was a concern as to how will students from historically disadvantaged universities will cope. Central to this was that universities under this category were not well advanced when it came to having suitable systems to cater to online learning. These universities mostly cater to students from rural areas, hence the suspension of and face to face classes and the sudden switch to online learning raised a lot of questions, especially relating to the quality of graduates that were going to be produced and the experiences of first-year students and the implications this will have for their future. Many students who study in historically disadvantaged universities come from rural schools that do not have advanced computer facilities, hence when they are encountered with the need for online learning at university, especially in their first year, learning this may take time and end up affecting their academic progress. With the above and employing a literature review, this paper examines how the unequalness of SA's higher education system coped with the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in historically disadvantaged universities. This paper is guided by the following questions: to what extent has COVID-19 affected the provision of quality education in SA's higher education sector? How have historically disadvantaged universities coped with the pandemic and to what extent have students been able to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on their academic progress?

The Role of Universities in Preparing Future Public Servants.

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Abstract

The envisaged National Development Plan Vision 2030 (NDP) identifies the need for capacity building and improving education, training, and innovation for the realisation of the government's vision. Therefore, the literature on public administration education suggests that educational systems in a society must be able to transform the objectives of the curriculum to assist learners to acquire requisite skillsets and knowledge for a prosperous lifestyle. Conversely, universities that fail to produce qualified graduates does not offer its graduates the opportunity to compete with the outside world. Evidence gathered from various studies highlights the significance of the supply and demand of skills connection between government and universities offering public administration. Hence, the main objective of the paper focused on the role of universities in preparing future public servants. This study adopted a systematic review approach using relevant government publications, legislation, acts, newspapers and journal articles to examine the role played by the universities in preparing future public servants. The findings indicated that public administration curriculum offered in universities is in line with public sector needs. Furthermore, universities should be in partnership with relevant stakeholders in improving the skills demanded by the public sector. Therefore, the study suggested that sufficient resources are necessary to achieve skills development in universities enhancing the preparations for future public officials.

Keywords: University, Public Administration, Curriculum, Public Servants.

Enhancing the Quality of Graduates through Enactus Organization: A Pioneering Journey for Graduates in South Africa.

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Abstract

Through Servant Leadership and Innovation Enactus as a global non-profit organization encourages students in higher institutions to learn and use innovation and business principles to improve the quality of life in rural communities. Through servant leadership, this platform has connected the university's vast resources, such as academic competence, with the most pressing civic and societal concerns. Enactus students serve in various rural areas and use innovative skills to secure a living post-graduation, as a result, many have been successful in establishing job possibilities for others. Graduate quality in Africa is often associated with employability rather than the potential to apply innovation. As a result of the poor quality of graduates in Africa, Mohamedbhai (2014) states that graduate unemployment is on the rise. This paper contends that the ability of graduates to engage in servant leadership and apply innovative skills to address the most pressing concerns of poverty and unemployment may be used to assess their quality. Thus, the aim of this paper is to study the efficacy of the Enactus organization in improving the quality of graduates through servant leadership and innovation in South Africa. Data will be gathered through national presentations or in-depth interviews, where twelve (12) Enactus teams in South Africa voluntarily showcase the socio-economic impact of projects in their respective communities. The following questions will be addressed in this paper: What is the role of Enactus organization in student entrepreneurial skills development? To what extent do Enactus projects create employment opportunities in rural communities? What is the role of higher institutions of learning in addressing socio-economic challenges faced by rural communities? Thematic analysis will be utilized to assess the study's findings, paving the path for Enactus to improve not only the quality of graduates in South Africa but the well-being of many communities through servant leadership and innovation.

Keywords: Enactus, Quality Graduates, Servant Leadership, and Innovation.

Reconceptualization of 'Quality of Graduates': Viewed through Southern Theory.

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Abstract

The perceived lack of quality in educational processes and hence the accumulation of deficits in competencies by the graduates in higher education (HE) has been central to many studies from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Educational competencies of those who graduated towards the end of the pandemic were seen in the context of many adversities that universities, especially those in the less developed global south, experienced. In this context this theoretical enquiry focusses on 'quality of graduates' for reconceptualising HE- a need that the pandemic has forced upon universities in the less developed south. Raewyn Connell (2007)'s seminal conceptualisation of 'southern theory' helps us view the notion of 'quality of graduates' from a particular social theoretical positioning. An argument that a more inclusive social scientific theorisation is needed to understand the dynamics of the current society is central to southern theory (Connell, 2007). Connell questions the taken-for granted supremacy of European and North American metropole in defining social theory. Southern theory-based propositions have thus disrupted conventional ways of explaining social scientific phenomena. The ethical questions regarding the ways in which universities in the global south helped its students confront the pandemic offer a case in point. The mechanisms that institutions in the global north had in place for their transition to digital instructional environments stand in stark contrast. The 'quality of graduates' in HE during the pandemic is thus scrutinised in this theoretical enquiry. An elucidation of how southern theory can be used to understand the north-south disparity in educational affordances and the resulting notion of 'quality of graduates' is also dealt with in conclusion. The ways in which a societal emergency such as COVID-19 offers an opportunity for extending southern theory is explored as well.

SUB-THEME 10: QUALITY ASSURANCE OF LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

Academic Development Practitioners' Contributions to the Institutionalization of Teaching and Learning Scholarship: A Myth or a Reality.

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Abstract

This is an empirical study based on sorting the epistemological dissonance between Academic Development Practitioners (ADP's) and faculty/discipline academics in transformation of pragmatic world. The authors solicit the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) to mitigate the epistemological dissonance between the former and the latter in ensuring that there is harmony between theoretical and pragmatic worlds. The paper is of the view that, in the light of bridging the gap between the theoretical worlds with the pragmatic world, there is a need for joint cooperation and working together between the ADP's and the faculty/discipline academics. A Boyer's 4 domains of Scholarship grounded on scholarship of teaching, discovery, integration, and application was used to frame the article. Pragmatism paradigm influenced the choice of Boyer's theoretical framework as there is inter-relatedness between it and the latter. From a pragmatic point of view, curriculum should be designed around principles such as; principle of dynamism and flexibility, principle of utility, principle of activity and experience, as well as principle of integration. The study followed qualitative approach where 6 programme/qualification designers who are also facilitators of formal university qualifications were sampled. Data collection was done at two different levels of participants, during the programme design state, and as well as during practical facilitation stage in the blended classroom which is encompassed of face-to-face and online teaching. The instruments such as interviews and document analysis were used to collect data. Since the study involved qualitative research, thematic data analysis was applied for data analysis.

The joint collaboration between ADP's and academic discipline specialists does advance translation and transformation of practice in the pragmatic world. The partnering between the discipline specialists and ADP's heed towards industry and academia collaboration. The importance of strengthening of academic development centres can never be over-emphasized. ADP's and academics must interact in the field of education by identifying global and specialized skills that graduates must possess in order to be competitive professionals and good global citizens. Their cooperation and participation will lead to the development of more effective pedagogical strategies for achieving these skills.

Keywords: Academic Development Practitioners, Discipline Specialists, Academics, theoretical world, pragmatic world.

A Review of The Pandemic's Impact on Graduate Attributes Assessment and Student Performances.

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Abstract

As a result of COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, universities across the world had to implement emergency strategies of teaching and learning to meet the institutional goals. The year 2018 saw the rollout of new qualifications, in South Africa, and thus introduction of graduate attributes assessment as per Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) requirement. These graduate attributes are exposed to students at the entry level, developed at the intermediate and finally assessed at the exit level. This study assesses the impact of COVID-19 (technological, pedagogical, and social challenges) on graduate attributes assessment and student performances. Also, the study further investigates and identifies the factors affecting students' readiness and performance on graduate attributes during the pandemic period.



SUB-THEME 11: STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

Evaluation of First-Year Students Experiences of Flipped Classroom Blended Online Learning During COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case Study of Mathematics Course in an Extended Curriculum Program.

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Abstract

The shift to remote learning during the COVID-19, pandemic presented a unique challenge for Higher Education in developing countries like South Africa, where there is differential access to resources. At the University of Technology, the Department of Chemical Engineering adopted a flipped classroom blended online learning approach in an Engineering Mathematics course. This study presents first-year engineering students' experience transitioning from face-to-face learning to flipped classroom blended online learning. The flipped classroom blended learning approach was supported by five components that allow students to Discover, Learn, Practice, Collaborate and Assess. The selected assessment strategies used adaptive learning technology through the WebAssign platform to offer formative and summative assessments with timeous feedback to each student. The authors analysed the remote teaching and learning approach using three indicators (i) Learning: students experience learning (ii) Assessment: students' academic performance and integrity, (iii) Students challenges and recommendations. The results positively impacted students' learning and exemplary performance in the Mathematics course. The overall results of this study concluded that students needed time to adjust to online pedagogy for a smooth transition.

Analysis of E-Learning Strategies for Teaching and Learning in a COVID-19 Era.

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Abstract

The shift to online or e-learning was by no means easy and Universities are still grappling with the challenges faced by the move from traditional learning. Instructional strategies have advanced rapidly given the epidemic realities of isolation, separation, and distance. A cause for concern is that the well documented benefits of online learning become diminished as the negativities of online learning become more obvious. The study found that technological difficulties, accompanied by an inadequate technical skill set and level as well as teaching style were not compatible with online learning. Furthermore, a lack of engagement between students and instructors, and poor communication further hampered online learning. Building upon this line of thought, this study examines different strategies that lecturers can take heed of to be deployed in a world designed on COVID-19 restrictions. The study is important for institutional wellbeing and health.

Keywords: Teaching and Learning strategies, higher education, digital teaching and learning.

Analysing Mobile Device Security Concerns in Terms of COVID-19 at a Tertiary University in SA.

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Abstract

The use of smart phones in organisations have increased over the past few years. This is because these devices have improved ability and help employees conduct work activities and it can help with the pandemics that is being experienced worldwide. As the organisation add more devices to the network that should help with privacy, security becomes an issue for the organisation. Security is important because organisations have sensitive data (on COVID infections for example) which must be protected. Previous studies have shown that mobile devices may be a risk to security. This makes it necessary to establish what threats these devices pose to an organisation before allowing them to be used for extra duty during pandemics. A survey was used to collect data. Results from the study confirmed that smart devices in organisations systems can be a security threat, especially if users do not follow policy. This study proposes that the organisation should secure the smart devices by pre-installing anti-malware software to prevent users from being hacked and to protect their COVID status. These results will benefit management and help them to create policies that secure the network during all times, especially pandemic control.

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Abstract

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The Perception on Blended Learning among Students who are from Technologically Disadvantaged Educational Backgrounds.

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Abstract

The COVID-19 lockdown compelled higher education institutions to embrace the use of technology in the teaching and learning process more frequently than previously. The student cohorts enrolled in the higher education institution under study in this paper, on the other hand, come from a technologically challenged background. This is largely because the technology was not used as a learning aid in students' previous schooling. The purpose of this study was to look into how students from a technologically disadvantaged educational background perceive blended learning in their Cost Accounting 2 level 2 learning at Walter Sisulu University, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. A quantitative approach was used to accomplish this because it allows surveys to be delivered to the entire impacted population while also reducing sampling error. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, online questionnaires were used to collect information from participants. The participants expressed that blended learning is efficient and effective for learning Cost Accounting 2. The findings also show that using a customised learning management system makes learning more exciting for students and improves their learning experiences. Connectivity was identified as a barrier to this mode of learning. According to the study, constant reminders of any uploaded information on the system used, as well as improved connectivity, will speed up the process. In general, students, regardless of educational background, are enjoying this new mode of learning to such an extent that it could be introduced to the basic education level as well.

Keywords: Blended learning; Coronavirus (COVID-19); Student perceptions; Cost Accounting 2; Disadvantaged educational background.

Learning to Read and Reading to Pass: Literacy Disparities Faced by WSU Students, Komani Campus.

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Abstract

The study aims to explore current modern literacy challenges faced by Walter Sisulu University (WSU) students and develop a model to fit their context and adopt other models that could assist in closing the gaps. Early literacy skills are undoubtedly fundamental for students' intellectual development and that trickles down to their ability to read, comprehend and write in the post-schooling sector. However, academic institutions have over the years, invested more capital on establishing writing centres to eradicate deficits in literacy skills. Despite the work done by institutions of higher learning to close these gaps, students continue to struggle with academic writing especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study will adopt a qualitative phenomenological or case study design. The study will use in-depth interviews, which are useful for data collection for a qualitative study and analyse data thematically. Analysis will draw from primary collected from WSU students, and secondary data from online books, journals, and reports from research institutes. Conclusions will be drawn from the findings and suitable recommendations will be made.

Keywords: early literacy, literacy models, higher learning, early childhood development, academic writing, teaching and learning.

Multimodality Preparatory Support Need in the Multi-Campused University Access Programmes.

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Abstract

University Access Programme (UAP) is a program designed for students who could not meet university minimum requirements, due to underperforming at high school. This kind of program is offered in some institutions in South Africa. Demand to enrol in this kind of program seem to have increased, as it seem appropriate and associated with enabling students to further studies, and afford students articulation and progression opportunity to preferred mainstream higher education degree. In my previous paper, findings indicated deficiency in academic support in UAP campus contrast to counterparts in mainstream campus. Therefore, it was pivotal to identify multimodality preparatory support (also known as best practices) to redress academic support at UAP particularly addressing preparatory support. Multimodal preparatory support strategies are available globally, however, in this literary piece attention will be on the following, just-in-time ICT training, collegiality as a strategy, Learning Assistant Support Centre, and accessible and unlimited academic advising. This paper is rooted in Functionalism as theoretical framing mainly drawn from Merton (cf. Benokraitis 2016; Ferrante 2016; & Henslin 2008). This theory explicates how society's institutions performs different functions. That is, the acts are performed with the intention of reaching desired outcomes, however, functions can be unintended. Higher education as one of the institutions in existence in society, are also expected to perform, however, salient dysfunctions can be a challenge. Merton (in Benokraitis 2016; Ferrante 2016; & Henslin 2008) views dysfunctions as institutional actions that can disrupt the smooth functioning and well-being of the whole system. This literary piece has adopted a qualitative research design, and data collected through focus group discussions facilitated by Free-Attitude Interview (FAI) technique.

Keywords: multimodality preparatory support; multi-campused; university access programme.

Teacher Presence as the Driving Force for Quality Feedback for Writing in Academic Literacy.

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Abstract

As a result of Covid-19, our attention in the Academic Literacy classroom has shifted more to online methods of pedagogical practice. As such, we are provided a greater insight into the importance of teacher presence when teaching Academic Literacy skills, especially with regard to corrective feedback for process writing. This paper will therefore interpret the relevance of teacher presence with regard to the way students engage with written feedback from online academic writing assessments, such as expository essays, during a time when teacher presence has been limited to a computer-generated classroom environment. This research study will focus on accumulated data to gain both facilitators' and students' perceptions of online formative assessment in the context of an Academic Literacy course, which generated both qualitative and quantitative data. Findings from this research show some concerns about students not being able to respond sufficiently to constructive feedback when restricted solely to an online platform, especially relevant to process writing. The shortcoming confirms that students then cannot improve their academic writing to the degree needed to succeed at the university level. This study thus demonstrates the fact that an absence of a teacher presence in fact hampers the learning process. In addition, a lack of teacher presence combined with a lack of teacher and student interaction and engagement, peer and teacher feedback, and scaffolding, amongst other socio-constructivist teaching strategies, in an online environment, creates even more obstacles. Fortunately, teaching solely in an online environment has compelled teachers to implement innovative student engagement techniques. The paper will then show that we can take what we learned from some of the restrictions posed by an online environment to bolster either a blended or if need be, an exclusively online learning approach.

Assessment of Students' prior knowledge as a pathway to address the inadequate mastery of Academic Literacy Skills: A case of First Year Students

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Abstract

The satisfaction of the academic needs of diverse student population in the advent of COVID-19 era is a major conundrum in the academic literacy modules in many institutions of Higher Education. However, it is imperative to understand the students' prior knowledge as an effective strategy to gauge the inadequate mastery within the module content. The purpose of this study is to assess and address the challenges facing students as they adapt to the institution of higher learning at one of the South African rural universities. Purposive sampling technique and survey questionnaire was uploaded on the Moodle LMS of Academic literacy module to solicit the sections that require meticulous attention. Quantitative method was employed to solicit the descriptive and numerical data for critical analysis. The hundred and twenty (120) first year level students enrolled in the academic year 2022 who are in the extended degree programme were sampled as the participants in this study. The findings of this study exhibit the poor basic computer skills, reading comprehension, poor paragraph skills, dictionary literacy skills, direct and indirect speech, identification of grammatical errors, struggle to produce coherent and cohesive writing. Moreover, this approach seems to be effective and efficient in gratifying the student's individual needs in relation to the English for academic purposes. This pathway has enabled the lecturers to assess what students know, such that they can strategically allot time to the areas of the greatest need. This strategy further aided lecturers fine-tune the content of their instruction. This paper recommends that the pre-existing knowledge should be integrated with the new content to expedite the students' understanding of the subject and maximise the conscious control in each section.

Keywords: competency, conceptualisation, inadequacy, metacognition, perception, syllabification.

Students' Experience of Online learning: Lessons Learned Teaching Organic Chemistry to First-Year Students.

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Abstract

Organic chemistry is a section taught in the 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 explanations would be placed on the university's learning management system for the student 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 student's 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 along with the challenges faced. These results will be used to modify my teaching for future classes.

Students' Perceptions on Remote Learning and Campus-Based Learning: A Case for the Rationality of Shifts to Contactless Teaching and Learning Higher Education.

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Abstract

The Covid 19 pandemic and shifts to remote learning have led to debates around the “new normal” in teaching and learning in higher education. This mixed methods research presentation focuses on student perceptions of both remote learning and campus-based face-to-face teaching and learning in higher education. A sample size of 20 students was randomly selected from the faculty of education and faculty of Economics, Finance, Information, and Technology Systems from orientation registers. Data was collected using both open-ended and closed questionnaires. The investigation utilised an interpretive design, to present and analyse data. The study was underpinned by Lekhehle's (2020) model from which the themes were created. The findings suggest that some students prefer online learning to contact or face-to-face learning for their assessments more than face-to-face. As for teaching, most students preferred to be taught face-to-face. The study recommends that on top of the laptops students have, more computer labs are introduced so that most of the time students can be in an environment where they can interact (collaborate, solve problems together, and socialise) as peers. The study concludes that students prefer both online and contact learning and teaching environments.

Keywords: Engagement, belonging, interact, perception, remote, and online.

Students' and Lecturers' Perceptions on and Competencies of Online Teaching & Learning Imposed by the Pandemic.

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Abstract

Across the globe, the COVID-19 pandemic discovery has brought the lives of many to a standstill and challenged the status quo of many institutions, such as those of higher education. These institutions are still battling with adjustment to the new normal, which has imposed online teaching and learning as the distance between students and lecturers began to resemble safety. This research article aims to provide a view of existing literature on online teaching and learning in Higher Education across the globe since the COVID-19 pandemic based on students' and lecturers' perceptions and their competencies in online teaching and learning. A synthesis of existing literature across the globe collected through a search of articles that fall within the search block “COVID-19 and Higher Education Institution (HEI)”. Then search criteria within the block included “online teaching and learning AND HEI”, “Online pedagogies and HEI”, and “Online learning and HEI”. Other articles were discovered by following those referenced from an article and those that referenced the given article.

Findings: The article anticipates establishing a perspective of how Higher Education Institutions around the globe responded to online teaching and learning imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly from the student's and lecturers' views, what they have learnt and what the new trends are.

Research implications: Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic will assist in re-inventing a new culture of responding to system shocks within the teaching and learning spectrum, particularly in designing innovative online pedagogy.

Value/Originality: A synthesis of what has been done will illuminate the emerging challenges in teaching and learning online and set a research agenda from where we are.

Note: Further, after the conference presentation, this study will be done in the context of the South African universities, where data will be collected and analyzed.

Keywords: Higher education, Online pedagogies, Online learning

An Investigation into Quality of Service in Teaching and Learning at a First-Year Module at a University of Technology.

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Abstract

The Objective of this study is to investigate student's satisfaction with academic service offered at a university of technology, by measuring the gap between student's expectations of services and perceptions of the actual service provided and to identify the areas that need improvement. A cross-sectional survey was conducted among students who were admitted to the department in the faculty of engineering in a university of Technology the Republic of South Africa. A Service Quality (SERVQUAL) instrument was used to collect information from a sample of 39 students. The instrument comprised of 25 questions assessing 5 dimensions of the academic services provided to students during teaching. The mean student expectations and perceptions as well as the gap score values for each dimension of academic service were tested for differences between the mean scores. The results indicate that the highest service quality gap among the dimensions was tangibles with a score of (-0.641) and the second highest gap by responsiveness with a score of (-0.598) followed by the dimension reliability (-0.481); then the dimension, assurance (-0.454); and the least gap by dimension empathy (-0.470). These results indicate that students were not satisfied with the academic service quality in relation to all the dimensions in the SERVQUAL model. The study showed negative gaps for the 5 dimensions evaluated in academic service quality and comparing to another study found the results similar. This could provide the management of the faculty with information about the aspects of academic service that promotes more student satisfaction. The university should aim to pay their utmost attention to the dimensions that have the largest gaps and set them at the top of their priorities.

Keywords: Academic Service Quality, customer service, perception, SERVQUAL Model, Higher Education, university of technology.

Induction Programs: A Key Component in Overcoming Transitional Challenges Faced by ECP Students.

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Abstract

There are many factors that influence students' success and retention at the university. For new students, beginning at the university can be just as overwhelming as it is for new staff members. There are many things that a new first-year student needs to adapt, learn, and adjust to within their first few days, weeks, and months at the university – from how to choose friends, manage their time, study, and attend classes, to where they need to get students' support and academic advice and many other matters. The Induction programs play a key role in making the transition into a new environment easier for students. In a longer-term sense, induction programs also lay the foundation for new students to succeed in their academic journey at the university and have interest in learning that leads to a good learning experience. In addition, induction programs also reduce risks associated with a new student having to drop out of school and improve retention. This article has sought to provide insight into the importance of induction programs for new first-entering students (FTENs) in extended curriculum programme (ECP) in one rural university in South Africa. A sample group of new ECP students registered for the year 2022 in a diploma program (ICT), were selected as participants in this study. The aim was to investigate whether these students were starting out their academic journey or simply starting at a new University. The findings of this study show that induction programs have a positive impact on students' academic journey at the university and their interest in learning. Furthermore, the study shows that there is no one size fit all way to conduct an induction program because every university has different needs as do the students who are being registered there.

Sharing Control With “The Audience” in an Online Academic Literacy Class: The Pseudo Social Media Classroom.

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Abstract

Sharing control with “the audience” in an online Academic Literacy class: the pseudo social media classroom. Fostering engagement between educators and students in the Academic Literacy (AL) online environment is challenging, especially as the shift from face-to-face learning to sudden online learning during COVID-19 occurred so rapidly. Despite this, it is possible that tools for engaging learners, improving learning and teaching, and thus student success, came into being as a result of the crisis in which lecturers found themselves. One such method of enhancing student learning occurs when control is shared in the online classroom, thereby providing a solution which assists in overcoming lack of student interaction, as well as engaging students academically. As students are familiar with social media and game shows, where they are used to sharing thoughts and opinions, simulation of this in the online classroom may provide answers to student participation on an academic platform, such as Blackboard Collaborate. Thus, ideas for gaining audience participation in popular game shows and social media can be applied to the classroom through sharing control. For example, when the audience gains more control through participation on a game show, ratings ultimately improve (Enli & Ihlebæk, 2011). Similar tactics may be applied to online learning with tools, such as Polls, Like buttons, Mic and Chat functions, especially in AL where expression of opinions and critical thinking are so important in establishing the necessary writing skills needed at university. Hence, there is a shift in the power dynamic in a classroom which leads to the students experiencing a sense of community and ultimately, an increase in engagement, as well as improvement in vital academic literacy skills. Therefore, this paper demonstrates how a control-sensitive environment enhances student engagement and success in an online academic literacy classroom by analysis of student perspectives through quantitative and qualitative data.

Induction Programs: A Key Component in Overcoming Transitional Challenges Faced by ECP Students.

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Abstract

Putting together a Portfolio of evidence is a difficult, time-consuming, and intimidating undertaking, especially when emergency remote online teaching and learning is required. Under these conditions, student teachers were required to finish their school experience for teaching practice and provide portfolios of evidence to demonstrate their competencies. As a result of the teaching and learning conditions, these students were required to create electronic portfolios of evidence to showcase their practice. Given that there were no contact lectures or tutorials during this time, these students had to rely on Blackboard support in a form of online recorded training sessions to help them construct their school experience e-portfolios. The aim of this study was to evaluate how Blackboard support equipped the student teachers to develop their e-portfolios with no face-to-face contact sessions. This study examined the benefits of Blackboard support in the building of e-Portfolios by student teachers, using the e-learning ecologies framework as a guide. The fourth-year and post-graduate certificate in education (PGCE) students submitted data through a qualitative survey in which they narratively conveyed their perspectives on support provided for e-portfolios. Content analysis was used to extract meaning units, which were then assigned to themes and categories proposed by the affordances framework. This study reports on the usefulness of the framework to evaluate Blackboard support as well as the affordances that are most and least attended to, through the support provided. Recommendations on the effective use of Blackboard, the practices that would foster the realisation of all the affordances, and enhancement of e-Portfolio development for school experience are furnished.

Keywords: Blackboard, School Experience, e-Portfolio, e-Learning Ecologies, Affordances

Assessment of First Year Students' Prior Knowledge as a Pathway to Address The Inadequate Mastery of Academic Literacy.

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Abstract

The satisfaction of the academic needs of diverse student population in the advent of COVID-19 era is a major conundrum in the academic literacy modules in many institutions of Higher Education. However, it is imperative to understand the students' prior knowledge as an effective strategy to gauge the inadequate mastery within the module content. The purpose of this study is to assess and address the challenges facing students as they adapt to the institution of higher learning at one of the South African rural universities. Purposive sampling technique and survey questionnaire was uploaded on the Moodle LMS of Academic literacy module to solicit the sections that require meticulous attention. Quantitative method was employed to solicit the descriptive and numerical data for critical analysis. The hundred and twenty (120) first year level students enrolled in the academic year 2022 who are in the extended degree programme were sampled as the participants in this study. The findings of this study exhibit the poor basic computer skills, reading comprehension, poor paragraph skills, dictionary literacy skills, direct and indirect speech, identification of grammatical errors, struggle to produce coherent and cohesive writing. Moreover, this approach seems to be effective and efficient in gratifying the student's individual needs in relation to the English for academic purposes. This pathway has enabled the lecturers to assess what students know, such that they can strategically allot time to the areas of the greatest need. This strategy further aided lecturers fine-tune the content of their instruction. This paper recommends that the pre-existing knowledge should be integrated with the new content to expedite the students' understanding of the subject and maximise the conscious control in each section.

Keywords: competency, conceptualisation, inadequacy, metacognition, perception, syllabification.

The Perceptions of Medical Laboratory Science Students on the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) In Education at a University Of Technology.

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Abstract

Technological environments and demands of the new teaching and learning paradigms have paved the way for educational institutions to use Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to enhance the quality of student learning. The cross-sectional study sought to investigate the perceptions of undergraduate Medical Laboratory Science students on the application of ICT in education at Mangosuthu University of Technology, Durban, KwaZulu Natal. The data is currently being collected through a self-administered electronic survey/questionnaire. The garnered results will be analysed with an appropriate statistical tool, interpreted, the student answers will shed light on their skills and the competencies for both lecturers and academic support. This would be of great benefit in helping to shape the use of ICT in lecturer education.

Key words: Medical Education, Higher Education, ICT, Technology Education, Teaching and Learning

Technology in Institutions of Higher Education (HE): The Impact of COVID-19 on Teaching and Learning Amongst First-Year Entry Learners in Previously Disadvantaged Universities.

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Abstract

The envisaged PAN African Virtual and E-University (PAVEU) as advocated in the Africa Agenda 2063 is one of the prominent African Union (AU) flagship projects which aims at achieving human capital, science and technology and innovation across Africa. The target is to ensure access to continued online higher education by exploiting the digital revolution, and global knowledge, and reaching a multitude of learners and professionals on various sites simultaneously. Hence, the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) in 2020 has had devastating effects on the higher education system in South Africa and beyond. More specifically to previously disadvantaged universities that had to adjust immediately to the changes in the mode of delivery in academic activities. In South Africa, a multimodal teaching approach had to be embraced by both learners and academic staff as the country was subjected to lockdown regulations to ensure that teaching and learning activities were not compromised. Therefore, this study investigated the impact of the COVID-19 amongst first-year entry learners in the use of technology in teaching and learning at previously disadvantaged universities in South Africa. This study adopted a systematic review approach using relevant legislations, acts, government publications, newspapers and journal articles to examine the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic on first-year entry learners in previously advantaged institutions. The findings of the study indicated that first-year entry learners had a challenge in adapting to the new normal. The study further identified computer illiteracy, poor connectivity, and limited access to proper devices for academic learning as challenges which had an impact on the poor performance of learners. Therefore, the study recommends that the government through the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) develops a model to be adopted by all institutions which will ensure effective teaching and learning for first-year entry learners. The model should capacitate both academics and learners to mitigate the pandemic issues in teaching and learning.

Promoting Innovation in the Institution of Higher Education.

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Abstract

The objective of the paper is to instigate the promotion of innovation in the institutions of higher education in South Africa. There is currently a demand for innovation in the institutions of higher learning since the outbreak of the COVID 19 in this country. The modes of teaching and learning need to be innovated or re-invented as well as what must also be taught. This paper will start off by discussing the factors for promoting innovation/re-invention, and the factors which are against it. It will go to the teaching and learning challenges experienced by lecturers and students during the COVID 19 period. It will also discuss the educational curriculum responsiveness and the strategies to deal with educational challenges in higher education. Towards the end of this paper, the researcher will come up with the recommendations and conclusion. The paper will employ qualitative method of research to investigate the study, and it will follow the critical approach to research and analysis of data.

Key words: Critical theory, Innovation, Covid 19, Education, Higher education

The perceptions of the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) for Hospitality Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

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Abstract

Peer Partnerships

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) refers to programs that links university students to a workplace associated to their field of study. Work Integrated Learning is done with the aims to combine academic learning of a field of study with the practice of work through a specific program. Hospitality and Tourism industry has been selected for Work Integrated Learning to allows students to gain hands on experience with the skills they need for a specific job and also gives students the opportunity to explore new and exciting roles that may have not been considered or existed. Furthermore, the Hospitality and Tourism industries are highly human-intensive and guest-oriented, which means that they require not only classroom knowledge and concepts, but also real-world experience.

A study was conducted during COVID -19 pandemic at the University of Zululand campus in 2021 to explore the Hospitality and Tourism students' perceptions of experiences during their work-integrated learning (WIL). A Mixed research method combining both quantitative and qualitative approach to address the perceptions of the students on the hybrid WIL model have been used. Twenty-seven (27) 3rd level B. Consumer Science (Hospitality and Tourism) students participated in the study, whereby the inclusion criteria were based on voluntary basis. Students participated in the study by completing a self-administered survey questionnaire with open ended semi-structured questions. Data was analysed using descriptive stats for frequencies, percentages, and averages. Findings revealed that 100% of the students felt that the WIL preparation workshops, which were in the form of face-to-face classroom sessions and recorded videos were experience valuable. The WIL training environment was good for 59.3% participants and 11% found it excellent. A Likert scale was used to rate the variety of training methods used and a majority (33.3%) of the students felt indifferent about the diversity of the methods and only 3.7% felt that it was poor. It was concluded that the hybrid model can be highly acceptable to hospitality industries that are well organized, informed in new technological trends to use during unprecedented times such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

In order to improve this model an integrated study is recommended that will review the experiences of all three key stakeholder groups: the students, the host organizations and the academic coordinating department during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key Words: WIL, Hospitality industry, Face to Face training, Virtual training, COVID-19 pandemic.

in a First-Year Transition Programme during Covid-19: Unmasking Student Voices.

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Abstract

Student voices have the potential to increase student engagement; encourage collaboration and partnerships between students, academics, and student support units. This presentation focuses on students as mentors, mentees, and transition officers who engage with each other within an institution-wide First Year Transition Programme (FYTP). The FYTP is a peer partnership intervention that is founded on the idea that students connect with other students who can identify and understand their particular experiences in adjusting to university life. This model is a collaborative peer-mentoring partnership that provides a dual layer of support that is offered to first year mentees in the transition programme. This layered support of peer mentoring contributes to a more holistic approach to the traditional dyad method and provides deeper insight into the unique needs of the first year student. The transition programme plays an important role in creating a sense of connectedness, partnerships, and self-agency that could support students in their first year transition. FYTP has developed the motto "For students, by students, continuing the chain of change." This paper highlights the partnership of the First Year Transition Officers (FYTOs) and the first year mentors in supporting mentees towards a successful virtual first year university transition. Qualitative data collected from the FYTOs and mentors' narrative monthly reports during the pandemic are reflected upon by the FYTOs. The study highlights the challenges, tensions, and successes in the partnerships created during the COVID-19 pandemic. It draws on the sociocultural perspective on student engagement, which focuses on the impact of the broader social context on student experience and provides actionable focus on how challenges could be addressed and partnerships strengthened.

Keywords: Student Partnerships, Mentors, Mentees, First Year Experience, Transition"

Challenges Faced by First-Year IT Students from Rural Areas in Adapting to University Life: Case of A University of Technology.

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Abstract

Transitioning from high school to university in South Africa is a stressful process, especially for students from rural areas who must frequently travel long distances just to access higher education, which usually means being exposed to new cultures and ways of life. Students typically have high hopes and ambitions to attend university. After the democratic election that ended the apartheid era, the South African education system took on a new dimension, with the emergence of new policies to address various educational imbalances and inequalities that had long existed during the apartheid era. Students from rural areas started having better access to university education. This study looks at how first-year students from rural areas cope with the transition to university life. The number of students migrating from rural areas to urban areas to pursue higher education has increased. These students face numerous challenges as they adjust to a diverse and unfamiliar cultural environment. This study examined the challenges faced by first-year IT students from rural areas in adjusting to university life using Oberg's "culture shock" model. To collect data, a combination of digital questionnaires via Google forms and semi-structured interviews in person and on Microsoft teams were used. We surveyed 54 students as a pilot study and had further one-on-one interviews with 12 students. This study identified key challenges faced by first-year IT students in their adaptation processes. These challenges include financial, social, technical, and academic challenges. The findings of this study are crucial in aiding universities to develop support systems to help rural students better adapt to university life. It is envisaged that better adaptation can positively contribute to their educational outcomes.

Keywords: financial, academic, social, technical, first-year IT students, adaptations.

SUB-THEME 12: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Knowledge Generation in South African Higher Education: Models for Linguistic and Cultural Inclusivity.

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Abstract

Higher education is considered to be one of the major sectors involved in the business of knowledge generation and sharing. As such, universities are knowledge intensive organisations. In fact, their mandate as well as their primary function is driven by, amongst others, knowledge generation and sharing. The dilemma that tends to confront societies is a purposeful mission to selectively select and recognise certain bodies of knowledge with the exclusion of others in respect of knowledge generation and sharing. This is particularly true for the South African universities which operate in multilingual and multicultural environments. Apart from relying on data from specific best practice bi- and multilingual teaching examples, this chapter draws on Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy which underpins social justice orientations. In so doing, this paper delves into the literature and thus examines the notions of knowledge generation and sharing in higher education, with reference to the pre and post-apartheid eras. Based on the models for linguistic and cultural inclusivity, discourses of knowledge that are supposedly shaping the future of our diverse higher education also receive treatment in the discussion. The paper concludes by professing for the decolonisation of knowledge, and for knowledge that considers the diverse backgrounds of students.

Key words: Knowledge generation, knowledge sharing, critical pedagogy, multilingualism, multiculturalism; higher education; social justice, decolonisation.

The Digital Divide: Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Emergency Transition.

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Abstract

COVID-19 ushered in a new normal for most higher education institutions with the transition from face-to-face to online teaching and learning. In some ways, the Covid 19 pandemic has forced us to consider what is important to save in an academic schedule. For some institutions it was the academic syllabus students had to cover while other institutions felt compelled to ensure that final exams take place. Such decisions and choices reflect which aspects of the educational endeavour are most important to us. Regardless of our differing perspectives on what is most important in the academic agenda, the Covid 19 epidemic has posed a threat to the completion of educational objectives. With the pressure mounting up to complete the academic syllabus many institutions quickly transitioned to online learning. This transition, I argue had implications for students and academics who are technologically challenged and hence contributed to the increasing challenges of the digital divide. This paper addresses the lessons learned with the transition to online learning with a specific focus on the digital divide.

Keywords: financial, academic, social, technical, first-year IT students, adaptations.

Social Media During Covid-19: The use of Whatsapp as an Online Medium by Providing Higher Education Institutions with a Lifeline.

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Abstract

March 2020 saw South Africa go through its first 21-day lockdown and fear gripped the country as a new virus identified as COVID-19 caused a rampage throughout the world. During this time history became the devil's advocate by reminding society of the previous flu known as the 1919 Spanish flu which saw millions of people succumb to it. Social media to a large degree enabled a confused and sadden society to be connected. Besides essential services, all other companies were instantly shut down. Social media became society's lifeline during COVID-19 because it enable them to be connected. Social media became life for offline settings. This became society's life support which supported life. A forward message does not declare the original sender and neither does it restrict who the next receiver could be. Businesses were also able to function with social media to the point that people could now buy everything from a shop without going to a shop. Social media could not take over all functions which were needed but it helped provide a sustainable bridge for post lockdown. Certain sections within the country where production was needed, etc, experienced the full brunt of the lockdown. Artisans and artist lost their expertise because of the demonstration. Higher Education Institutions had some forms of online platforms which were used, however, distance learning was implemented overnight through the use of online mediums. Whilst Moodle is a required platform used by many Higher Education Institutions, other online platforms are also used. This paper looks at the use of WhatsApp as an online medium providing Higher Education Institutions with a lifeline by keeping it connected during COVID-19. For this paper, the author uses the Shannon and Weaver Model of Communication which looks at the sender and receiver and medium used to disseminate information. The senders and receivers are students, lecturers, administration staff, and management. The research methodology used for this paper is qualitative research as other journal papers and online statistics will be analysed.

Visibility of Women in the School Governing Bodies' Management of Schools' Finances: A Case of two Primary Schools in the Free State province.

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Abstract

This study sought to reveal the visibility of women in the school governing bodies (SGBs) management of school finances in the Free State province. There are a number of studies based on women leadership in primary schools and it shows a great deal of scarcity of women being visible in leadership positions. Literature, continuing statistics and reports indicate that women are vastly underrepresented in school leadership, despite their increased interest and achievements (Dotzler, 1993). Women have been responsible for most of the teaching and a great deal of informal leadership in schools, this shows how women have contributed in valuable ways to the education community. The Constitution of South Africa has always strived to improve its gender equality since the end of apartheid in 1994. The South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 (Section 16(1)) provides for the establishment of School Governing Bodies (SGBs), consisting of school principals, parents or guardians of learners, educators, learners (in a high school context) and non-teaching staff member. It is compulsory that parents of learners in that school represent the majority of the SGB. The SGB is in charge of managing the schools' finances and in most schools, males are the ones who are in leadership positions. The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions is not unique to South Africa (Gopper, 2020:1). The study will adopt a qualitative research methodology as a lens to conduct the study of interest. Mohajan (2018:1) states that a qualitative research study involves an explicit, disciplined systematic procedure that is inductive in nature and aims to explore meaning and insights. The study will take place in two primary schools in the Free State Province.

An Analysis of South African Universities on the Social Media Space.

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Abstract

Social media usage has rapidly increased over the past decade, with over 4.4 billion people actively using different social media platforms. Twitter, for instance, records more than 500 million tweets on a daily basis. This trend is increasing exponentially and is set to define how people interact and do business. Despite the extensive proliferation of social media in different domains, higher education is yet to fully embrace and take advantage of social media platforms to drive its agenda. People rely more than ever on their social networks when making decisions hence the usage of social media by Universities can contribute in student recruitment. The effects of social media campaigns on consumers' perception of products and brands have been studied for a long time. From a theoretical standpoint, social media presence contributes to value-enhancing and has the potential to shape and influence brand perception. Failure to make use of social media may result in the alumni and students to creating alternative and unregulated sites, and thus the University risks losing complete control of its brand online. Another risk of not having a solid social media presence is that the University may only trend when negative events happen, eg social unrest and strikes. Those that embrace social media always drive the conversations pertaining to their brands. In this work, we critically analyse the social media presence of Universities in South Africa. Using techniques from graph theory, we identify the influential players who drive conversations on Higher Education in South Africa. To perform this analysis, we used a computer program written in the python programming language to mine and organise all tweets pertaining to higher education institutions in South Africa.

Keywords were developed and used as search criteria for the tweets. A total of 400 000 tweets were extracted and cleaned before analysis.

The looting culture and its value in the transformation of higher education.

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Abstract

South Africa's higher education remains fraught with discriminatory and exclusionary practices which have resulted in perpetual violent protests and looting. The culture of looting is an inherited ideological trait and not a new phenomenon. It has potential to continue unabated unless the universities transform and decolonise. Higher education suffered colonial domination and the underlying structures of oppression are very much alive. The chapter analyses the looting culture and its value in changing the higher education landscape. Some criticise the phenomenon of looting in higher education as having paralysed academic activities and is characterized as the highest level of criminality. While others describe violent protests and looting have to be viewed in different perspectives due to varied complexities and historical experiences. The dominant view adopted in this chapter relates to its recognition as a weapon of fighting social, economic, cultural, political and personal injustices. In the context of this chapter therefore, the looting culture has positive implications for transformation and significant shifts in the curriculum. Looting is viewed as the language best understood and responded to by government and university management within the African context. The universities have developed new policies and frameworks concerning equality, equity, transformation and change but the implementation requires a complete reframing, rethinking and reconstruction of the education system and curriculum. Higher education has to create an environment which recognizes diversity in the student population and caters for the needs of all students.

Keywords: decolonization, diversity, higher education, looting culture, transformation



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