


Chapter 3

Implications of the Transition From Face-to-Face to Online Learning on Student Teachers in Training: A Case Study of the University of Limpopo

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ABSTRACT

Since the beginning of higher education, from the period of colonization to decolonization, almost all South African universities have been dependent on face-to-face learning. However, due to the outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020, a transition from face-to-face learning to online learning was implemented. Student teachers at the University of Limpopo had to adopt a new approach to learning. This involved using an online platform for the delivery of lectures and assessments. This

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posed serious challenges for student teachers living in a rural area due to the lack of telecommunication infrastructure and devices. Student teachers are predominantly from rural areas which pose a lacuna in research. The results achieved by the students were average since students made an alternative to study and even resorted to using their cellphones. The University of Limpopo adopted a few approaches to help students learn online by providing them with laptops and sim cards with data which can help to connect to the internet. The Blackboard platform was used to conduct lessons and assessments online.

INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has brought several changes to societies at large (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020; Sims & Baker, 2021), these changes were accompanied by both the good and bad. In 2019, serious concerns about the disease led to the establishment of social distancing by governments and various institutions (Thunström, 2020; Marchiori, 2020) to try to prevent the spread of the disease. Many higher learning institutions were obliged to establish social distancing guidelines on their various campuses (Sims & Baker, 2021). This has led to the postponement of various face-to-face events and activities for many universities in the world.

All this was done to prevent and avoid the spreading of the disease in the learning environment (Daumiller et al, 2021; Gloria & Uttal, 2020) because the pandemic largely affected the entire educational sector at all levels. Therefore, most universities and other learning institutions were forced to transit from the face to face to online teaching and learning. However, the challenge was that lecturers or instructors were not fully familiar with the online learning environment strategies and technologies (Daumiller et al, 2021), and these pose a serious concern to both the students and instructors to effectively implement online teaching and learning.

This transition was however seen as a challenge for most rural-based universities which lack both resources and infrastructure for effective online teaching and learning. Some instructors and students resisted the transition from face-to-face to online learning (Sims & Baker, 2021) but they remained with no option because the disease was very contagious. In the 2020 academic year around the month of July, more than 50% of South African universities were already learning and teaching online (Mpungose, 2020; Motala & Menon, 2020; Dube, 2020), but there was a delay in this transition for most of the rural-based universities of South Africa.

The University of Limpopo is one of the rural-based universities in the rural settlement of Mankweng. These rural-based universities were not spared from the transition from face-to-face to online teaching and learning (Olawale et al, 2021;

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