

Transitioning from Face-to-face to Remote Teaching in the Context of COVID-19 Pandemic: Reflections of South African Emerging Academics

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Abstract

The rapid spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) across the globe led to the World Health Organisation (WHO) declaring this pandemic a global disaster. Likewise, the South African government declared the pandemic a national disaster. This declaration saw an abrupt shutdown of universities among many other facilities and an immediate evacuation of students from residences. Consequently, academics immediately had to find effective ways of providing timeous learning for all students, irrespective of their geographical locations. Underpinned by the dialogism theory and through the use of the narrative inquiry methodology, this study explored emerging academics' experiences of transitioning from face-to-face to online teaching at a higher education institution. The findings show that the COVID-19 pandemic forced the participating emerging academics to migrate from their familiar

zone (on-campus face-to-face contact teaching) to an unfamiliar zone (online teaching within the confines of home), wherein they sought new ways of surviving including exposure to remote teaching and new skills. Owing to this, a conclusion is drawn that these academics will inhabit a new familiar zone post the pandemic.

Keywords: COVID-19, face-to-face pedagogies, remote online pedagogies, dialogism theory, narrative inquiry

1 Introduction

The rapid spread of the novel coronavirus across the globe led to the World Health Organisation declaring this pandemic a global disaster. Following this pronouncement, the pandemic was declared a national disaster in various countries, including South Africa. This catastrophe in South Africa saw an abrupt shutdown of universities among many other facilities and an immediate evacuation of students from residences. On 23 March 2020, the South African president, Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa, announced a national lockdown with effect from midnight of 26 March 2020, as a nation's attempt to delay the spread of the virus. The lockdown confined people to their homes to either stay or work from home. The majority of staff members at higher education institutions, especially academics were amongst the people who were expected to work from home during the national lockdown, and they relied on information communication technology (ICT) for their daily operations (Goolam 2020).

The closure of higher education institutions resulted in online teaching becoming a new routine in most countries, including South Africa. Although this is an ideal option in times like these, students who do not have internet access in many countries with societal inequalities may be excluded (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2020). In this chapter, we direct our focus to academics who play an instrumental role in the move to online teaching. The chapter aims to bring to the fore their lived experiences of transitioning from face-to-face to remote teaching in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. To this end, we utilised the narrative inquiry methodology to solicit and interpret the reflective narratives of three emerging academics in a South African university. The key research puzzle (question) that the chapter addresses is: What are the opportunities and challenges

experienced by emerging academics during the transition from face-to-face to remote learning in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?

2 Emergency Remote Online Teaching

The terms ‘online learning’ and ‘e-learning’ are often used interchangeably in the literature (Khoza 2018; Rana & Lal 2014; Singh & Thurman 2019). The emergency remote online teaching refers to an abrupt transitioning of instructional delivery from face-to-face and hybrid learning to fully remote delivery mode as an alternate teaching and learning strategy due to crisis or emergency circumstances (Alexander 2020; Gurunju 2020; Govindarajan & Srivastava 2020). The primary objective of the emergency remote online teaching is to provide all students speedy access to learning during the time of crisis. While it becomes inevitable to directly link remote teaching with online learning, it is important that we highlight its distinctiveness to avoid conflating it with already established online modes of teaching and learning, for example, distance learning and other hybrid pedagogies. With the COVID-19 crisis, Gurunju (2020) and Govindarajan and Srivastava (2020) put forward ‘emergency remote pedagogy’ or ‘pandemic pedagogy’ to refer to the online teaching and learning due to abrupt separation of teachers and students due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Chinyamurindi (2020) is of the view that innovative online learning platforms such as Moodle, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype, and video conferencing can provide simultaneous interactions and communication environment between students and teachers. Generally, scholars advocate these 21st-century digital learning tools as potential tools to improve teaching and learning. These scholars highlight features such as oral communication between teachers and students, exchange messages through typing onscreen, sharing PowerPoint presentations with audio, transmitting videos and internet surfing (Chinyamurindi 2020; Darby 2020; Stanford 2020). Apart from this, online learning platforms also allow teachers to track and monitor students’ learning progress and monitor their performance on different learning tasks (Chinyamurindi 2020). This shows multiple possibilities that come with online teaching tools.

3 Academics and Online Teaching and Learning

During the Fees Must Fall student protest in South Africa, Czerniewicz, Trotter and Haupt (2019) examined academics' experiences of using online teaching. The experiences of academics were found to be dissimilar. On the one hand, some of the academics experienced a deterioration in terms of student engagement and performance. On the other hand, some of the participants alluded that the online teaching enhanced learning in that students were exposed to different modes of teaching, which included videos (Czerniewicz *et al.* 2019). One factor that appears to be an impediment in terms of online teaching is the relevancy of pedagogies. Scholars have made strong claims about the move to online teaching without online pedagogies (Anderson, Imdieke & Standerford 2011; Kebritchi, Lipschuetz & Santiago 2017). The application of traditional pedagogies in online teaching platforms could prove to be ineffective, as online teaching requires a pedagogy for online teaching (Anderson *et al.* 2011; Kebritchi *et al.* 2016).

In the same vein, Islam, Beer and Slack (2015) suggest that academics need to do more than just developing new ICT skills. Academics also need to develop pedagogical skills so that they can transition well to online teaching. Similarly, Goh, Leong, Kasmin, Hii, and Tan (2017) at a Malaysian university, suggest that the effective online pedagogical training for teachers is essential for successful and meaningful online interactions between students and teachers and amongst students. The online teaching is not a direct transfer of the face-to-face activities to online platforms, but it has its own dynamics, for instance, Cornelius and Macdonald (2008) in the United Kingdom (UK) found academics struggling to keep engaged with all posts in the online forums. As a result, most academics resorted to a selective approach, as they could not read all the posts (Cornelius & Macdonald 2008). Again, Mihhailova (2006), whose study also focused on academics, found that dealing with queries and preparing for online teaching took more time compared to face-to-face instruction. Online teaching demands more time to prepare and plan; sometimes, more time is spent online (Kebritchi *et al.* 2016). According to Cavanaugh (2005), preparing for online lessons can take twice as long as preparing for face-to-face lessons.

4 Students and Online Learning

There is a strong belief that access to the internet, computers and cell phones have reached levels of near saturation in undergraduate populations, especially

in developed countries such as the United States of America (Dahlstrom & Bichsel 2014; Smith, Raine & Zickuhr 2011). However, unaccounted for digital inequalities may persist even with equal ownership and use (Gonzales 2014; Hargittai 2011; Tamrat & Teferra 2020). For example, low and middle-income families with internet access are often ‘under-connected’ due to periodic unpaid monthly bills, slow and broken hardware, and shared access (Rideout & Katz 2016).

A study that was conducted in the United States of America found that even though there was a general use of mobile phones and laptop computers, nearly 20% of students experienced problems including broken hardware, data, and connectivity (Gonzales 2014). Rideout and Katz (2016), whose study found students in low and middle-income families having low or no internet access, support this. Noting that South Africa is a developing country with a majority of low-income communities, the hardships experienced by students are even worse. Tamrat and Teferra (2020) claim that in Africa, only 24% of the population has access to the internet and poor connectivity; thus, going online would pose a serious challenge to students. This challenge has been referred to as a digital divide, meaning the inequalities set aside the ‘haves’ from the ‘have nots’ (Rideout & Katz 2016:1).

5 Theoretical Framework

The dialogical imagination theory was adopted to understand the experiences of emerging academics in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The dialogical imagination theory or dialogism was originated by Mikhail Bakhtin (1984) to understand people’s consciousness; however, many other scholars have contributed to this construct. The dialogism approach is explained by Holquist (1990) as an interesting mix of the epistemological and the axiological; he claims that a dialogue always involves truth as intertwined with our personal situation (epistemology) and with our relationship to others (axiology). The epistemology within this framework is understood as an individual’s understanding from the point of view of his/her situation, while axiology involves a relationship with others and relationship with oneself (Holquist 1990). Therefore, the dialogical imagination theory views the truth as a phenomenon that embodies both axiology and epistemology (Bakhtin 1984; Holquist 1990).

In simple terms, the dialogical imagination theory holds a view that people are always in dialogue or relationships with other people, situations, values and beliefs (Sullivan 2010). These factors are deemed to influence the way they think, the depth of their thinking and also the capacity for change (Sullivan 2010). There are two dimensions of knowing as proposed by Bakhtin (1990), namely, authoritative knowing and carnivalistic knowing. On the one hand, the authoritative knowing refers to knowing that relies on the authority of an individual or institution for its truth claim, rather than on rationality (Bakhtin 1990; Sullivan 2010). The dialogue within this dimension foregrounds the stance of ‘I-for-others/others-for-me’ (Sullivan 2010). On the other hand, the carnivalistic knowing is generated from spaces where hierarchical structures and inequalities are suspended; these spaces are characterised as ‘free from authority’ (Sullivan 2010:369). The dialogue within the carnivalistic knowing calls for what Sullivan (2010:369) calls ‘I-for-myself’.

The inquiry presented herein drew on these dimensions of knowing to understand emerging academics’ experiences of transitioning from face-to-face to online teaching. As individuals, professionals and employees in a higher education institution, the participating emerging academics understand themselves in relation to other people as well as the employing institution; these factors contribute to their authoritative knowing (Sullivan 2010). Again, the emerging academics as individuals alive in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic make their own contemplations only about themselves, and from these contemplations they derive the carnivalistic knowing (Sullivan 2010).

6 Methodology

The authors of this chapter are emerging academics in different disciplines within a School of Education at one of the universities in South Africa. These academics had a random WhatsApp chat on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the influence thereof on teaching and learning at a higher education institution. Resulting from this chat, one of them suggested that they respond to a call of book chapters on COVID-19. This suggestion received a unanimous acceptance, and from this point onwards, they scheduled zoom meetings to work on the chapter.

The study reported in this chapter engaged with the experiences of emerging academics within the interpretivist paradigm. The interpretivist

paradigm dismisses the notion of solitary reality and suggests a multiplicity of realities (ontology); from this perspective, there is a strong belief that individuals develop subjective meanings of their own personal experiences and this results to multiple truths (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2011; Creswell 2013). In line with this positioning, special attention was paid to each emerging academic's subjective interpretation of the studied phenomenon (Creswell 2008). Apart from the research paradigm, a qualitative research design was adopted. This design afforded us an opportunity to understand and describe the emerging academics' experiences of transitioning from face-to-face to remote pedagogies, which is a social phenomenon under study (Flick 2007).

Regarding methodology, a narrative inquiry was deemed suitable for accessing the lived experiences of the participating emerging academics. Clandinin (2013) describes the narrative inquiry methodology as a way to narratively inquire into experiences intimately, over time, and in context. Engaging in narrative inquiry in the context of COVID-19 deprived us the physical intimacy with participants; however, we were able to forge the intimacy virtually. Additionally, the narrative inquiry foregrounds the establishment of good rapport between researcher and researched (Clandinin 2013; Clandinin & Caine 2008), in our case, the relationship we had established among ourselves as colleagues played a significant role in eliciting ease of storytelling. Three of the four authors of this paper participated in the study. These three emerging academics were purposefully selected as they had already experienced the transition from face-to-face to online teaching. To somewhat fade their identification, we make use of pseudonyms Sbahle, Nonhle and Nobuhle to refer to them in this chapter.

In keeping with the narrative inquiry methodology, a narrative way of generating field texts (data) was utilised, namely narrative interview. The narrative interview is a pertinent method of generating field texts in narrative studies where a participant is allowed an opportunity to freely relay his or her experiences (Adler & Clark 2008; Olive 2014; Clandinin 2013). To operationalise this method, the participating emerging academics were each allowed an opportunity to relay their stories of lived experiences. All the sessions took place on Zoom and were recorded. Following the Zoom meetings, these academics were then requested to transcribe their own stories to ensure that transcriptions capture true reflections.

Subsequent to transcription, the transcribed field texts were analysed using narrative analysis and analysis of narratives. The narrative analysis,

which we call the first level of analysis, is a process of constructing a coherent account of a person's experiences (Polkinghorne 2002). At this phase, the non-participating author engaged in developing accounts of the participants' experiences. The narrative analysis process involved studying of the transcriptions and discovery of plots that connected field texts elements; these plots were then used to construct a unified episode of each participant, hereinafter referred to as a re-storied narrative (Polkinghorne 2002). For the purposes of this chapter, the re-storied narratives are not presented herein; however, we make sensible extractions from the re-storied narratives in the presentation of findings.

Upon completing the construction of the re-storied narratives, the non-participating author shared the narratives with all co-researchers. This was done for two reasons; firstly, to allow each participant an opportunity to check if her story is a correct representation of her experience, and secondly, to share field texts with all co-researchers so that they begin to engage with the re-storied narratives with an intention to identify emerging meanings or themes. This process contributed to the verisimilitude of the study, which is a trustworthiness criterion for good literary study, in which writing seems real and alive to allow a reader to have a vicarious experience of participants' situations (Creswell 2008; Loh 2013). The verisimilitude principle puts forward a twofold member-checking, namely peer validation (each co-author reads her story) and audience validation (each co-author reads others' stories).

Following the re-storying process, Zoom meetings were scheduled for a week to work on the analysis of narratives, which we call the second level of analysis. At this phase of analysis, we closely examined each re-storied narrative and looked across the three re-storied narratives to identify themes that answer back to our research puzzle (Polkinghorne 2002). The identified themes are presented in the findings section below.

7 Findings

In this section, we present the opportunities and challenges experienced by the participating emerging academics during the transition from face-to-face to online teaching in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. The section is organised in two sub-sections; in the first sub-section, we discuss opportunities, while in the second sub-section, we present challenges.

7.1 Opportunities for Emerging Academics in the Midst of the COVID-19 Outbreak and National Lockdown

The COVID-19 predicament engendered disturbance and devastation to all human societies in the globe. Although Sbahle, Nonhle and Nobuhle were disturbed by the pandemic like all other people, they realised that the COVID-19 situation gave rise to opportunities in their professional lives. These opportunities are serendipitous exposure to remote teaching and learning possibilities as well as a learning season on remote teaching and learning. We present full discussions of these opportunities below:

7.1.1 Serendipitous Exposure to Remote Teaching and Learning Possibilities

It came out vividly from the stories of Sbahle, Nonhle and Nobuhle that the COVID-19 predicament serendipitously exposed them to alternative pedagogical practices and benefits thereof. This exposure broadened the professional landscape for these emerging academics as they got a chance to re-imagine their practice. Below, Nobuhle explains how her professional construction has been altered during the COVID-19 period:

Although, the pandemic had an awful impact on humanity, I, in the midst of adversity got an opportunity to re-imagine myself as an academic as I broke away from the confines of face-to-face pedagogies and explored new teaching platforms in virtual spaces.

Sharing similar sentiments is Sbahle who also was impelled by the devastating COVID-19 lockdown to shift from face-to-face to remote teaching. She explains her experience underneath:

The need to shift to remote learning in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged me to step out of my comfort zone of traditional approaches to teaching. I am undergoing the process of learning to embrace new ways of teaching, to understand remote pedagogies and their benefits for quality teaching and learning. This transition has made me rethink my pedagogical practices and has opened my mind in terms of possibilities embedded in remote learning.

The switching to remote teaching was an effortless exercise for Nonhle, as she had used numerous online platforms such as ZOOM, Skype and WhatsApp, among others for her personal affairs. However, the period of COVID-19 and national lockdown made her realise the possibilities embedded in these online tools for her teaching. She explains her experience as follows:

I have learnt to merry Zoom with WhatsApp in facilitating teaching and learning. For instance, I realised that my first-year students are struggling in developing the problem statement for their research proposals despite few discussions we have had on how to develop this component of their research. I then decided to provide them with an example of a problem statement through our WhatsApp group and asked them to critique it ... Following this, I scheduled a Zoom meeting with them to further deliberate on problem statement development. I found this very productive, and I have decided on adopting this strategy for my teaching.

The reflections of Sbahle, Nobuhle and Nonhle depict the COVID-19 pandemic and national lockdown as a complex situation for academics as well as students to find themselves in. However, in the midst of the complexity, these emerging academics realised an opportunity to think and explore new ways of teaching other than the face-to-face teaching. These academics got exposure to online learning platforms which if used effectively, may stimulate learning (Chinyamurindi 2020). The face-to-face pedagogies appear to have dominated the professional practices of Sbahle, Nobuhle and Nonhle, although numerous online tools are available. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these emerging academics have had an opportune exposure to online teaching and learning tools and are now at a better position to explore the online learning and also to develop new pedagogies as Goh and Leong (2017) maintain that online pedagogical training is essential for successful online teaching and learning.

7.1.2 A Learning Season on Remote Teaching and Learning

The COVID-19 era is viewed by the participating emerging academics as a learning season. These academics explain that their employing university arranged several training sessions on remote learning tools to aid their

transition from face-to-face to remote teaching. Nobuhle delineates the learning opportunities she has exploited thus far:

The university has and is continuing to roll out training workshops to orientate staff members with online teaching and learning platforms. I have attended two workshops thus far and looking forward to attending upcoming sessions. Since this is a new avenue for some of us, including myself, I wish they can take us through step-by-step. In one of the workshops I attended, I got a feeling that we are expected to learn fast, and my fear was raised.

Nobuhle appears to be unhappy with the pace at which they are expected to learn; however, she is hopeful that learning will materialise. Sbahle also highlights the training sessions organised by her employing university. Although she is happy with the training initiative, she foresees challenges with regards to large class sizes. She explicates:

The university and specifically the School of Education is very instrumental in ensuring the readiness of staff members for the transition. The School has organised numerous online training session for academics on Zoom and Moodle as platforms that could be used for remote teaching and learning. I have explored the Zoom platform, and I am finding it tortuous. Apart from this, I foresee managing a large class on Zoom meetings, like my Language and Literacy, which enrolls 200 students and above to be a nightmare.

The COVID-19 era was a learning season for Nonhle as well, but her focus was on specific aspects which she had not previously explored. She illuminates:

At the moment I am familiarising myself with the Moodle platform, focusing on aspects I have not used before, such as forum discussions and assessment designing and running thereof. Moving forward to this terrain of ambiguity, I have learnt a few lessons which are already helping me in preparing for the modules I will be teaching in the second semester.

The above discussion shows that the COVID-19 era was a learning season for Sbahle, Nonhle and Nobuhle as they have undergone training on online learning platforms. These emerging academics took advantage of the training sessions offered by their employing university to learn different online tools as they were preparing to transition to remote teaching and learning. Here we see the emerging academics dialoguing with the COVID-19 situation and other people to find new ways of living (Sullivan 2010). Although the scholarship on online learning opposes the sole focus on ICT skills (Islam *et al.* 2015), the training opportunity enabled the participating emerging academics to carry out their mandate thereby ensuring that students achieve their academic goals. It is, however, important to mention that these emerging academics require further development on online pedagogies to achieve effectiveness (Anderson *et al.* 2011; Islam *et al.* 2015; Kebritch *et al.* 2016).

7.2 Challenges Experienced by Emerging Academics in Awe of the COVID-19 Pandemic and National Lockdown

The COVID-19 pandemic, as well as South Africa's inevitable national lockdown response, engendered disturbance and devastation to humanity. Sbahle, Nonhle and Nobuhle were also devastated in both their personal and professional lives. With regard to their professional lives, these emerging academics experienced the home and work paradox as well as students' challenges as impediments to remote teaching and learning. These challenges are discussed hereunder:

7.2.1 Home and Work Paradox

The national lockdown as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic compelled academics, among other professionals, to work from home. Although most academics' conditions of employment allow for working from home, Sbahle, Nonhle and Nobuhle have largely been working from on-campus office spaces. Therefore, the closing down of campuses due to the COVID-19 catastrophe bounded them to their home spaces, and they had to juggle between domestic and work activities. Sbahle explains her experience:

Although I am still finding this very difficult; I am learning every day to balance all activities and to embrace home as a new teaching space.

Working from home has both pros and cons; on the one hand, it allows for flexibility. I decide when to work (prepare PowerPoint presentations for online lectures, recording lessons and scheduling meeting with students, among other things) and when to spend time with my family. On the other hand, the home is a family space, and there are disruptions such as noise from conversations of family members, television and movement of children in the house.

For Nonhle, the idea of working from home compromises her productivity. She finds herself less productive at home compared to office space. She explicates:

... the change of workspace from office to home is a great challenge for me. I am not used to working from home, I prefer working at my workplace (university), and I believe I am more productive at my workplace than at home. The COVID-19 lockdown has forced me to develop a new routine wherein I find myself having to juggle between work and home activities, which is difficult, but I am trying.

Likewise, Nobuhle finds the idea of working from home unfavourable as she struggles with time management. She explains:

I am finding the idea of working from home not conducive for me as I am not good at time management. Working from home calls for the strict management of time as both domestic chores and work responsibilities contest my attention. For now, I am struggling to balance between home and work activities. Nonetheless, I take this situation as an opportunity to learn new habits which I assume will be most beneficial and valuable to me as an academic.

The need to work from home appears to be a predicament for all the participating academics. These academics, on the one hand, hold identities such as mother, daughter, sister and wife, among others, which are identities that play out mostly at home (Trepte 2006). On the other hand, they hold a professional identity. Therefore, the need to work from home required Sbahle, Nobuhle and Nonhle not only to accommodate their professional identity within their home space but also to move smoothly between these identities. These academics are free from authority at their homes, and they take full control of their new working routines (Sullivan 2010).

7.2.2 Students' Challenges as an Impediment to Remote Teaching and Learning

Sbahle, Nonhle and Nobuhle do acknowledge opportunities embedded in remote teaching and they are acquiring necessary skills to this end. However, these emerging academics foresee student diversity in terms of socio-economic status as an impediment to a swift switching to remote learning. Sbahle explains that all her learners would appreciate the opportunity to learn online, however, inequality is a reality to be considered in the South African context. She explicates:

What concerns me, though, are my students who are coming from different economic backgrounds. I believe all students would like the opportunity of learning remotely; however, resources such as laptops, smartphones and data might be an obstruction. This is a reality we cannot overlook in the South African context.

Pondering about similar views is Nonhle and she explains the plight of her students below:

... my students are finding online learning challenging because they do not have access to the internet. They are not affording data expense that comes with online learning. Additionally, some of them stay in remote areas with limited access to network connectivity and electricity.

Nobuhle further complicates the issue of students' challenges by paying attention to the demographics of students attending at her university. She expatiates:

The majority of students enrolled at our university come from disadvantaged communities and I foresee the new methodologies excluding some of them as they reside in areas with poor or no internet connectivity and sometime might not have DATA. Therefore, online teaching and learning tools are, of course, convenient for some of the students while they are inconvenient for some.

The above discussion reminds us of the reciprocal nature of the work of academics. The fulfilment of their role lies in students' grasp of content. Sbahle, Nonhle and Nobuhle appear to be ready for the transition; however, they remain in the dark about their students' readiness. South Africa, as a developing country, has a majority of low-income communities. Tamrat and Teferra (2020) propound that only 24% of the population has access to the internet. This, therefore, poses a challenge on academics' transitioning endeavours. From the dialogism perspective, the impact of students' challenges on academics' transition confirms that people are always in relationships (Holquist 1990).

8 Conclusion and Implications

This chapter sought to answer one research puzzle: What are the opportunities and challenges experienced by emerging academics during the transition from face-to-face to remote teaching in the context of COVID-19? We then return to this puzzle to draw conclusions.

Regarding the opportunities, the COVID-19 pandemic will always be remembered as a critical and unprecedented period in higher education institutions. This era forced institutions and academics thereof to find new ways to carry out their mandates and accomplish their missions. The findings of this study show that the pandemic forced the academics to migrate from their familiar zone to an unfamiliar zone. The familiar zone refers to the on-campus face-to-face contact teaching, while an unfamiliar zone refers to online teaching within the confines of home. This migration saw Sbahle, Nonhle and Nobuhle engaging in dialogues with colleagues, employing institution, students, the COVID-19 predicament, family members and above all with themselves in their quest to re-imagine themselves as academics. Owing to these dialogues, these academics realised a need to learn new ways of surviving within the unfamiliar zone. This includes exposure to online teaching and the acquisition of ICT skills. We label this forced migration as an opportunity for the participating emerging academics because they are unlikely to return to their familiar zone post the pandemic, but are likely to inhabit both zones. The ICT skills acquired by these academics as well as their experiences of online teaching will influence academics' imaginations of selves as academics as well as their academic practices post the pandemic. In this way, both the familiar

and unfamiliar zones will constitute their new familiar zone. It is worth noting that online pedagogy came up as one of the shortfalls in the academics' migration. Therefore, the development of academics in this aspect is recommended for the realisation of online teaching possibilities.

In terms of the challenges, during the COVID-19 pandemic, online platforms were the only available spaces for teaching and learning. However, contextual realities of South Africa stroke and reminded everyone of the inequalities in communities. These contextual realities involve, among other things, wide-ranging geographic locations, the majority of low-income families and massification in universities. The findings imply that the online teaching discriminates against the majority of students as most of them dwell in low-income communities and this very same income was threatened during the lockdown period. Additionally, it came up that some university classes host above 200 students. Therefore, the contextual realities of South Africa presented a strong voice in the participating academics' dialogue with the situation and they influenced their thinking.

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