(Re)Learning to Teach in Contexts of Crises

Editors: Nyna Amin and Rubby Dhunpath

*Alter*nation African Scholarship Book Series (AASBS)

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A list of 2020 and 2021 published titles follows overleaf

*Alter*nation African Scholarship Book Series
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Ramrathan, L., N. Ndimande-Hlongwa, N. Mkhize & J.A. Smit (eds.). 2020. *Re-thinking the Humanities Curriculum in the Time of COVID-19. Volume #01.*

Ndimande-Hlongwa, N., L. Ramrathan, N. Mkhize & J.A. Smit (eds.). 2020. *Technology-based Teaching and Learning in Higher Education during the Time of COVID-19. Volume #02.*

Mkhize, N., N. Ndimande-Hlongwa, L. Ramrathan & J.A. Smit (eds.). 2020. *Teaching and Learning in Higher Education in the Time of COVID-19. Volume #03.*

Smit, J.A., N. Mkhize, N. Ndimande-Hlongwa & L. Ramrathan (eds.). 2020. *Learner and Subject at the Dawn of Digital Humanities Online Research-Led Teaching and Learning. Volume #04.*

Manik, S. (ed.). 2020. *From High-risk Sports to Sports as High Risk: Crisis, Capitulation and Creativity during COVID-19. Volume #05.*

Kumalo, R.S. Kumalo, C. Lynch, C. Kimedjo, A. Adomako & M. Penda (eds.). 2021. *Critical Investigation of Humanitarian Aid in Africa. Volume #06.*

Singh, U.G., P.S. Reddy, M.W. Phiri & P. Appavoo (eds.). 2021. *Global Trends in Management, IT and Governance in an E-World (E-MIG 2019 International). Volume #07.*

Amin, N. & R. Dhunpath (eds.). 2021. *(Re)Learning to Teach in Contexts of Crises. Volume #08.*

Bob, U. (ed.). 2021. *The COVID-19 Pandemic: Impacts of the Corona Virus on Sport and Society. Volume #09.*

(Re)Learning to Teach in Contexts of Crises

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Preface

Emerging first in Wuhan, China, followed by its spread to other parts of the world, COVID-19 has had governments globally, systematically initiate a variety of forms of intervention, to curb its spread. These include lockdowns, the restriction of movement, forms of social distancing and sanitizing practices, as well as the requirement that citizens wear face-masks. Since the responses took place according to regional exigencies and directives, and were not uniform and equally comprehensive, they have also had diverse effects. Ranging from shortcomings in medical and health care provisioning, through economic downturns and fears of the increase in practices of governance surveillance, to the disrupting of schooling and tertiary education systems, sports, and cultural and religious events and practices, COVID-19 bodily, mentally, materially and socially, destructively affected the whole world. Apart from its continued deadly impacts, and barring the arrival of a universally effective vaccine, the spectre of COVID-19's expected second surge in 2020, with the arrival of winter in the northern hemisphere, also have had populations across the world readying themselves to learn to live with the presence of infection on a continuous basis.

Given this very brief and though limited scenario, this Preface provides the context for the first few volumes of the *Alter*nation African Scholarship Book Series (AASBS), dealing with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Focused on the impacts of COVID-19 on the Higher Education sector, at all levels, including curriculum, the first four volumes were in principle conceptualised by the *Alter*nation Editorial Committee (AEC), on 31 March 2020. This initial project problematisation has grown into eleven research groups with eight AASBS volumes, and five *Alter*nation Journal issues in production. Indications are that even if the world is rid of COVID-19 – which might not happen in the near future – its impacts will be lasting. These dynamics are being traced in the research, in-, as well as outside academe, as we learn to transform and adapt to new realities, possibilities, and drawbacks, of digital media.

The research produced by the *Alter*nation research groups constitute a small part of how academia is attempting to both provide academic leadership as well as engage the conundrums of the effects and impacts of COVID-19.

Prof Johannes A. Smit
Editor-in-Chief: *Alter*nation

A Note from the Editors

This book arose from an invitation to contribute a volume on the impacts of COVID-19 on higher education institutions by the Editor-in-Chief of *Alter*nation. We received close to sixty manuscripts. Twenty-seven were sent out for double-blind peer review and a final selection of fifteen was made. The chapters cover a range of issues pertinent to higher education and the authors include recent PhD graduates, postdoctoral fellows, and experienced social scientists and philosophers.

The number of submissions gives a clear indication of the influence of the current conditions on higher education knowledge production. It is our belief that this body of scholarship adds value to our understanding about teaching during a crisis and beyond that, to unexpected conditions that will arise without forewarning in years to come. Its contribution is pertinent for our emotional and cognitive well-being because it is evidence of resilience, and deep and insightful learning that those in higher education have gained – and more importantly, that it does not matter where, and when the (re)learning, learning and unlearning takes place. It matters that all kinds of learnings are taking place and are worth sharing.

We do not offer a commentary on each chapter. Instead, we leave it to readers to interpret the texts based on their own contexts, and philosophical, conceptual and theoretical preferences. However, we must declare, that the first chapter by Amin, Dhunpath and Devroop, outlines conceptually and theoretically the notion of '(re)learning to teach' as a problematic imperative emerging from the pandemic-generated crisis. It is not a conception that we imposed on the authors. We provided a wide berth for interpretation of the notion. Furthermore, there was no expectation for a particular paradigm or ideology despite our preferences for critical, poststructural and deconstructive worldviews. With more than seven billion individuals inhabiting the planet, it would be foolish to imagine that particular worldviews should dominate the interpretation and analysis of our inquiries.

The inclusion of the Spivak chapter in a format that differs from the rest in the compendium reflects our commitment to dissension. We chose not to amend the chapter for the sake of uniformity as its impact and power is expressed in the style the author is renowned for. We think you will agree with our decision.

In keeping with the editors' minimalistic approach, we chose not to thematize the chapters or to place them within sections. Each chapter, readers

will note, raises multiple issues and concerns, and the restrictions placed by themes and sections undermine complexity and connectivity. As a result, the sequencing of chapters is based on the logic (and convenience) of the alphabetical order convention (of the first author in each case). The chapters are interesting takes and include philosophical posturing and case studies in a variety of contexts and countries.

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Uncertainties and Ambiguities of (Re)learning[1] to Teach in the Context of Crises

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Abstract

This chapter offers a reading of the situation in institutions of higher education generated by the corona virus. Unprepared for the closure of institutions and still expected to provide tuition, the only option exercised presently is emergency remote teaching. Online platforms are simultaneously useful and challenging as institutions grapple with digital pedagogies. The question that we ponder in this chapter is the effectiveness of emergency remote teaching in the absence of experience to teach *for* these conditions. Effectiveness presupposes learning to teach. However, learning to teach requires learning differently, i.e. (re)learning, underpinned by a sensitivity to circumvent marginalisation and exclusion. We draw on the works of Agamben, Habermas, Laclau, Foucault, and Derrida, and deploy a range of deconstruction devices like empty signifiers, uncertainty, ambiguity, undecidability and pharmakon to build the argument. We also contemplate the possibilities and impossibilities of (re)learning to teach, and remind those who teach in higher education do so with creativity, and alacrity whilst being aware that ambiguity, complexity and the possible –

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[1] The bracketing in (re)learning is a reminder throughout the text of its undecidable, ambiguous and complex character.

impossible binary stalk all efforts to function in situations of intense abnormality.

Keywords: Ambiguity, crisis, higher education, (re)learning, teaching, uncertainty, undecidability

1 Introduction

This chapter sets up an argument about the need for (re)learning to teach in the context of crises and the multifarious challenges that are entangled therein. The landscape of teaching in higher education has changed substantially since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. There is both a scramble to cope with an unimagined situation as well as technological opportunism. In the meantime, higher education has responded by moving online and making extensive use of digital technology when institutions shut down to prevent the spread of the virus. Two years have passed, and the crisis has not abated. In fact, more variants have emerged, with UHI and Deltacron being the latest ones[2]. More variants are expected. Thus, the temporary move to emergency remote teaching may be prolonged for months, if not years.

Given the current situation, and the rapid implementation of virtual technologies for teaching and learning, we make a case for (re)learning to teach during a crisis. We do this by describing the challenges within notions of uncertainty and ambiguity. In that sense, uncertainty destabilises the arguments made throughout the chapter. Furthermore, we argue that higher education is enmeshed in issues like the vaccination mandates and profiteering by pharmaceutical and technology corporations and the state's desire for population control.

Next, we invoke the notion of 'empty signifiers' to explain that clarity is lacking, and that fear and panic underpin and amplify the challenges we face. In closing, we turn to Derrida's (1981) notion of pharmakon to consolidate and explain undecidability, uncertainty and ambiguity that affect both the prescription and the practice of (re)learning to teach. We begin with a quote from Dickens to capture the crisis situation as generated by the pandemic.

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[2] Earlier variants with Greek letter names are Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, and Omicron. Deltacron (the merging of Delta and Omicron) is a new discovery of the way the virus is morphing to create variants.

2 Future Present

Charles Dickens (1859: 1) begins his classic *Tale of Two Cities* with these memorable lines:

> It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.

With this oxymoron, Dickens lucidly documents the turmoil of the French Revolution, capturing an age of stark contrasts between London and Paris and the events leading to the French Revolution. Many of us will identify with the comparison because it resonates with our experiences of negotiating an uncertain, pandemic-stricken world. Indeed, for the past 22 months, higher education has been plunged into a 'winter of despair'. All that was once knowable and reliable about how and what to teach, has been disrupted and destabilised. Although always an imperceptible presence, uncertainty has become an explicit condition of teaching. In contrast, techno-optimists are certain and confident that a 'spring of hope' lies in digital and virtual technologies. It is a mantra they have been repeating for decades (see e.g., Martindale & Wiley 2005; Detweiler 2004; Lamb 2004) and during the pandemic crisis, touted as the only viable solution (Schroeder 2021; Dhawan 2020). The future, they proclaim, is here and now, whether or not we are willing or ready to navigate it. Yet, as we celebrate the triumph of resilience (or ignorance), we need to pause to reflect on our accomplishments thus far. Reflection is vital, as non-conventional teaching accomplishments may be perceived as spectacular or as irreverent blips in the history of education.

> All too often, we allow ourselves to be carried away by our busyness. We are too hyperactive, too reactive to even notice the hidden value-creating dynamics waiting under the surface within and around us. Tethered to our smartphones, we are too caught up and distracted to take the time necessary to sort through complexity or to locate submerged purpose. In our urgent rush to 'get there' we are going everywhere but being nowhere. Far too busy with transactive speed, we rarely step back to lead with transformative significance (Cashman 2012: 2).

While it may take decades to comprehend the full import of our decisions and actions regarding an undecidable, and oft times ambiguous teaching situation, there are signs and warnings that we have already been short-sighted (see Agamben 2021). A study conducted by Seirup, Tirotta and Blue (2016) found that during a period of normalcy, the benefits plateau for both faculty and students and the preference of both is face-to-face teaching. The study implies that the benefits of online teaching peak without adding more value thereafter. Despite the constraints on growth and progress, we can anticipate that the desire for online teaching will escalate during prolonged periods of social isolation. Even the half-and-half approach, blended learning, is experienced as both useful and ineffective by an individual (Fisher, LaFerreire & Rixon 2019).

Blended learning, initially used in corporate spaces to allow its employees to work and study without loss of employment (Sharma 2010), was recognized quickly by higher education for its flexibility and usefulness in resolving the challenges it faced, e.g. using distance education to attract part-time students. Without fully comprehending its challenges, blended learning became a new addition to the pedagogy lexicon (Rasheed, Kamsin & Abdulla 2020) and a catch-phrase for being current. Czerniewicz (2020) suggests, however, that 'It is something else, so call it something else!' She reminds us of the enormous challenges associated with designing higher education teaching and learning in 'normal' contexts, and by implication, the additional challenges that surface when 'hurried, incomplete and rushed efforts to teach online' (Czerniewicz 2020: 1) are implemented during a crisis.

The study conducted by Selwyn (2007) reveals a sobering view of the use of technology in higher education. It is neither used optimally nor perceived positively for creative and productive outputs. In the study, computer technology is viewed as generating linear thinking and hindering creativity (Selwyn 2007). More troubling, are the findings of a ten-year longitudinal study by Englund, Olofsson and Price (2017). Their main finding is that experienced higher education teachers are resistant to change. This is of concern because it means that there is a significant group of professionals who will continue to teach as if all platforms are the same. When the outcomes are unpredictable and contradictory, as the studies above reveal, resistance to change during crises may be accompanied by a reluctance to (re)learn.

Despite the undesired outcomes of online teaching, it has been embraced with bravado by 'instructional MacGyvers, having to improvise quick solu-

tions in less-than-ideal circumstances' (Hodges *et al.* 2020: 2). Those with the requisite resources thrive in this new age – or so it is believed (Luke 2003), as many privileged institutions invest their trusts and their endowments to the Silicon Valleys of the world. In the same way that we were seduced by the promise of the 'Fourth Industrial Revolution' (4IR), 'e-learning' has become the new mantra of higher education (see e.g., Gunasekaran, McNeil & Shaul 2002; Pantazis 2002). We are yet to determine whether both these labels are just 'empty signifiers' (Laclau 2000).

Empty signifiers tend to ascribe indeterminate labels of signification, which function primarily as receptacles that can be filled with different meanings, leading to obfuscation, ambiguity and even contradiction. Similarly, the signifiers '21st Century learner' and 'Generation X', are attached to another empty signifier - 'digital natives' – those we imagine are capable of taking responsibility for their learning or those 'naturally' programmed for a digital world, or even, the true inheritors of a digital future. Though there is minimal empirical evidence to suggest that digital natives learn differently, students are being inaugurated into teaching and learning realms that they apparently find comfortable (Speer 2007). The replacement of the now irrelevant digital native/ immigrant binary with the notion of 'digital wisdom' (Prensky 2009) is also not helpful because it suggests another empty signifier, 'digitally enhanced *homo sapiens'*. The offshoot is that the implemented alternatives, headlined by empty signifiers (4IR, e-learning, 21st Century learner, Generation X, digitally enhanced *homo sapiens*) create the illusion that higher education is providing 21st Century teaching (another empty signifier). The illusion - arising from the contradicting and obfuscating empty signifiers - serves ambiguity rather than providing clarity about impactful teaching and successful learning outcomes.

Despite the complexities revealed in the studies mentioned, online learning programmes have been used for decades, with many prestigious universities offering them as integral components of their programmes. Like all educational offerings, some are exemplary, some mediocre and some deficient (Serdyukov 2017). The willingness to defer to the authority of educational technologists 'who believe that online education practices are an act of salvation to the so-called 'educational apocalypse'' is disturbing (see e.g., Laskova 2021). Such a view frames technological innovation as a response to education in crisis rather than the intrinsic value and opportunities it offers to respond to the ubiquity of technology. Although online teaching is

potentially worthwhile, it is entangled in crucial economic and political agendas. For instance, the biggest beneficiaries of the education-in-crisis discourse are the technology companies, some of which have found in universities a lucrative marketplace to offer off-the-shelf solutions and customized learning management systems (Luke 2003). But the dangers of the present are not about the here, and now of capitalism and greed, it is about the future, as Agamben elaborates:

> Just as wars have bequeathed us a series of nefarious technologies, it is very likely that, after the health emergency is over, governments will attempt to continue the experiments they couldn't previously complete: universities will be closed to students, with classes only conducted online; we will no longer gather to have conversations about politics or culture; and wherever possible digital devices will replace any contact – *any contagion* – between human beings (Agamben 2021: 30). [Italics in original]

The project of re(learning), we think, is more vital than we thought – because it must include more than just new pedagogy, it must incorporate broader, critical content to prevent new forms of silencing, marginalisation and exclusion. No matter the different interpretations and meanings constructed, we attribute the origins of the challenges to the COVID-19[3] pandemic. The pandemic, in turn, has created a crisis of unimaginable magnitude, enabling the future to occupy the present. It is a present for which we are unprepared. We know there are challenges and that the solutions throw up challenges too, but the nature of the crisis is difficult to fathom, perhaps because it is too soon to know, or because we have not asked the appropriate questions. Nevertheless, in spite of our uncertainty about the crisis, and not wanting to deploy the notions of 'crisis' and '(re)learning' as placeholders, we provide content and interpretations of the former and latter notions in the sections that follow.

3   The Present: A Pandemic-Generated Crisis in Higher Education

On the 11 March 2020, the Director General of the World Health Organisation

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[3] The origins of COVID-19, however, are contested.

declared a worldwide pandemic following the outbreak of COVID-19 in the Chinese city of Wuhan (World Health Organisation, or WHO 2020).

As the virus spread, educational institutions shut down – leading first to interruption and thereafter a shift to emergency remote and distance teaching and making use of online platforms to do so. The closure led to the loss of face-to-face learning opportunities, delayed qualification completion, and the suspension of activities like graduation ceremonies, sports and social events. Globally, similar measures were implemented in higher education institutions.

It is unusual that there has never been a moment in history when institutions of higher learning all over the world were simultaneously affected by lockdowns, closure and the cessation of all physical contact.[4] Under these circumstances, several questions regarding teaching arose: Do we teach as we were taught? Can those who lack knowledge and education of digital platforms teach? Does the trope, 'teach as we were taught' exemplify an entrenched habit resistant to change? Is resistance to change a reflection of our 'idleness' to learn and relearn? Furthermore, unresolved questions, posed just a few years back, about the nature and purposes of learning (Mishra & Mehta 2017), the teaching of skills (Scott 2015), and questions about what students can do with knowledge rather than acquiring it (Silva 2009), persist. Higher education's long sleep (the way we teach) has been interrupted and we face the challenge of teaching not as planned distance teaching but as an emergency, remote approach. Could this prolonged, pandemic-induced crisis be the catalyst to learn, unlearn and to (re)learn the way we teach? Perhaps, when we consider that teaching has shifted from face-to-face lecture room arrangement to 'face-in-virtual-space' platforms, be it Zoom® or Microsoft Teams®.

However, the optimism we have of digital technology as the solution is not exciting as the 'form' of teaching changes but not its 'shape'. By 'form' we mean the teacher as leader, speaker, director, lecturer – the one orches-trating the teaching performance. Instead of teaching while standing in the front of (or behind) a group of students and delivering the contents, we shift platforms and assume we can connect with, inspire and hold the attention of those we teach (if we ever managed to do so successfully). As regards 'shape', Slack and Wise explain:

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[4] Even during the so-called world wars, only parts of the world, were directly involved (see Reynolds, 2003).

> The particular shape manifested by the process at a particular point in time is what Williams[5] means by culture 'as a whole way of life' (2005: 4).

The 'shape', resultantly, is unaltered. 'Teaching as we were taught' has become a 'way of life', that is to say, it is a cultural phenomenon: a template for the ways we teach (Owens 2013). Figures 1 and 2 show that, in essence, the default approach, 'teach as we were taught', endures. The similarities between face-to-face and faces-in-virtual-space are not accidental – because the way we deploy technology neutralizes the differences between the practices. Furthermore, the practices share common purposes, processes and outcomes. It appears then that the way we deploy technology is an indicator of our unwillingness to stray too far from the comforts of the familiar. In that case, we have to ask, can digital technology produce a different culture of teaching?

Figure 1. Teaching in a lecture hall[6]

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[5] A reference to Raymond Williams' (1960) book*: Culture and Society 1780-1950.* New York: Anchor Books.
[6] Source: ID 1677373561 Shutterstock.com
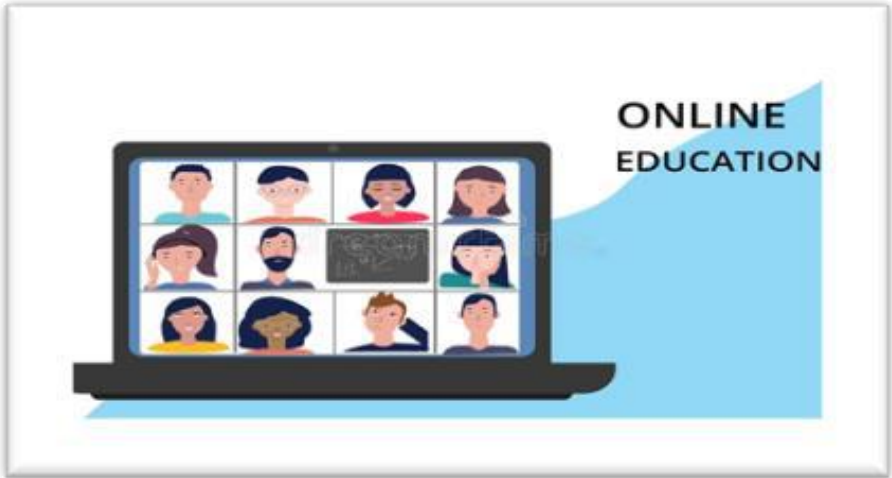
Figure 2. Teaching online[7]

Perhaps we are mistaken in thinking that the pandemic-induced crisis we face in education is unique and that the online route is the only solution. Audrey Watters (2020) asserts that 'there are precedents for what we are experiencing now – not just in the distant past or some faraway land' (2020: Online). She provides evidence by looking at the polio outbreak in Chicago Public schools in 1937 and the use of technology (radio and newspapers at that time) for educational provisioning. Regarding the pandemic of 2020, Watters (2020) questions why lessons have not been learnt from the Chicago 1937 outbreak. She argues that education has always been in a crisis and that the rise of the global crisis is a continuation of the perennial problems immanent in education – the difference now is that we are not only aware of the crisis in education, we know that the old solutions we thought were useful, are not. Old processes may, nevertheless, be useful with a caveat– it requires a rethinking, reimaging and reimagining of former processes. The world's population has grown, and sophisticated transport systems have enabled the virus to spread, unlike anything known previously. Incidentally, it also enables a rapid sharing of research and interventions that work in and for education, without knowing its full impact, we hasten to acknowledge.

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[7] Source: ID 183402639 © Ruslana Velychko. Dreamstime.com

Watters turn to the past will probably be counterbalanced by historians' interrogation of the COVID-19 pandemic in the future: how will they narrate the sudden changes, actions, decisions, and outcomes of those who lived through the crisis? What kinds of narratives will be valued and whose interests will they serve? A global event like the pandemic can trigger realignments of truth, of power and of hegemony. Displacement and disruption are reconfiguring the world as we know it. For example, we are witnessing, at present, the displacement of the power of the state with the power of pharmaceutical and medical research (Sharfuddin 2020).

A more complex analysis reveals that at the same time, a tenuous relationship exists between the state and medical research. Furthermore, the relationship is also symbiotic or antagonistic– depending on consensus or disagreements regarding diagnosis, intervention and prediction. For instance, various stakeholders, who seek alternative interventions, prefer Ivermectin as a treatment for COVID-19, even though it has been disparaged by governments and the medical fraternity (Nazar 2021). In comparison, the hegemony of 'vaccine as panacea' is undeniable, as evidenced by government stances (OECD 2021). The proliferation of government efforts to encourage and even to make vacci-nations compulsory, it should be noted, succeeds (to an extent) because of the public's fears of the dangers of not being vaccinated. The vaccination mandate, however, is subverted by misinformation and the rise of online 'experts' (Na-eem, Bhatti & Khan 2021). In contrast, anti-vaxxers operate in two ways: highlighting 'dangers' posed by the vaccine (see e.g., McDonald 2021) and posting a 'tsunami of misinformation' (Mokhtari & Mirzaei 2020). Hypervisible, too, is the domination and greed of developed nations as they monopolise the production and distribution of vaccines and virus research (Moreno, Sándor & Schmidt 2021; Storeng, de Bengy Puyvallée & Stein 2021).

Against this backdrop, it is apparent that as important as higher education is, it is a peripheral and not a central issue. Even though it is relegated to the margins of state agendas, higher education is also caught up in vaccine politics because students and staff possess rights that may be at odds with the 'must-be-vaxxed' expectation. The situation is tenuous and could lead to actions similar to the protests that destabilised higher education institutions in South Africa over the past few years. Crises, it appears, destabilise conceptions of 'normal', the idea that the activities of individuals, families, society, culture, the state, and higher education institutions, are stable, predictable and normative in character.

The 'new normal', first applied in industry (El-Erian 2010), was coined to denote deviations from established ways of doing business. Now 'new normal' is recast as a state of precarious instability; uncomfortable, yet unavoidable. It marks a dangerous phase for human beings because an invisible (to the naked eye), organism, a virus, not only orchestrates daily life, it can also end life, and more importantly, its trajectory is erratic and ubiquitous. The 'new normal' entails consenting to changing habitual patterns of living and learning in spite of the reluctance to do so.

Despite the world's interventions and remedies (or maladies depending on one's perspective) of past crises, such as, e.g., the two world wars, the plague, malaria, smallpox, and the great depression of the 20th Century, doubts exist about humanity's ability to cope and overcome the effects of the first global threat in the 21st Century, especially in light of the emergence of corona virus variants and four waves of high infection and death rates (D'Souza & Dowdy 2021). Apart from misinformation and fake news (Mokhtari & Mirzaei 2020), doubts linger because of collective amnesia – forgetting the tenacity and resilience that enabled past crises to be resolved, and propagating ideas of helplessness, hopelessness and futility (Pinto, Soares, Silva *et al.* 2020; Shaw 2020). George Santayana emphasises the point, in a different way to Watters critique (2020), that 'those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it' (2011: 172).

Governments have also to remember past solutions and failed interventions, and more importantly, recognize that it has to manage opposing dynamics to appease its citizens. On the one hand, it is reliant on medical science to combat the spread of the coronavirus and, on the other hand, it has to ensure the economic sustainability and viability of the nation. Similarly, higher education has to configure its way out of a conundrum to appease students: offering viable education experiences whilst maintaining a safe, contagion-free environment. Online education provides a solution, albeit with limitations and complications. Before the pandemic, the up-take of modes to displace the dependence on contact teaching and learning has been slow or absent, even though higher education institutions have instituted development programmes, mentorships and resources for staff. However, COVID-19 has significantly changed attitudes and preferences and galvanised practitioners towards technology-based, remote, online teaching approaches. Resultantly, we conclude that the crisis in higher education is narrowed to continuity of teaching, accompanied by the assumption that learning is taking and will take place.

4 Online Teaching: Pandemic Panic?

The shift to emergency remote online teaching has been described as 'panic-gogy' (panic + pedagogy) (Kamenetz 2020) and 'pandemogogy' (pandemic + pedagogy) (Escartin 2021). Sean Morris brought attention to the word, 'panic-gogy' after discovering it on a Twitter feed which described teaching solutions as 'grasping at straws' (Baker 2020: 1) and teachers' panic about 'how to maintain teaching in this environment that [they] don't understand' (Baker 2020: 1). In short, these are descriptors of the efforts made to make education available in ways that accommodate students' situations during a crisis – a view that, presumably resonates with the idea of 'no student left behind' (Domina 2014). In contrast, 'pandemogogy' refers to the methods of teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic (Escartin 2021). The term was debated at a virtual conference in the Philippines (Escartin 2021). Both 'panic-gogy' and 'pandemogogy' are caricatures of the global education sector's response to the crisis. Not all institutions and teachers are panic-stricken and not all are similarly obsessed by the pandemic.

Crises need not be debilitating. The history of education is littered with examples of ways in which crises,

> have been leveraged to encourage the adoption of new media: Sputnik is the most famous of these crises [solutions] perhaps, prompting a considerable push for better science and math education but also for more machinery to administer it; but we can also look at the rhetoric around teacher shortages, snow days, standardized testing, school shootings, and so on. And yes, pandemics (Watters 2020 online).

In other words, crises can spark innovation and originality. Crises can be seen as events of human possibility and beneficence. The convergence of digital technology and its reduced cost and greater accessibility (compared to costs of yesteryear) has made education accessible to millions, expanding the possibility of finding solutions to the endemic crises in education. Coupled with mobile technologies, the internet, and various media technologies, means that reconvening learning in new and exciting ways is feasible, possible and attainable, but not without complications and uncertainties.

A particular complication is the tyranny of fear that underpins decisions, actions, and inactions, too, during crises, e.g., the COVID-19 pan-

demic. When people are enrapt with anxiety, it presents the state with an opportunity to consolidate power over its citizens. In a series of incisive analyses, Giorgio Agamben (2021) warns of the connection between knowledge and power underpinned by fear. The suspension of face-to-face teaching is from, Agamben's perspective, reminiscent of Foucault's (2007) notions of biopower (control over citizens) and governmentality (rationalities, practices and techniques of governance for the control of citizens) (Foucault 1991). It is, in effect, the production of 'bare life' (Agamben 2005), if the temporary suspension of contact teaching becomes a permanent feature of higher education. More troubling is the uneven provisioning or ownership of resources that students need for wireless access to institutions of higher education. We know that the outskirts of the cities and suburbs are not adequately resourced for digital teaching and learning as large sections of South Africa do not have electricity supply and/or Wi-Fi networks. Without careful rethinking and (re)learning to teach, we are conjoined within circuits of power and the production of marginals:

> The new model of social relations is *connection,* and whoever is not connected tends to be excluded from relationships and condemned to marginalisation (Agamben 2021: 10). (Italics in original)

The State's response in South Africa to COVID-19 (similar to responses elsewhere in the world) has created, for the first time, a unique and shared set of conditions that exclude physical connection. Higher education's response involves the use of virtual platforms. Virtual platforms obviate isolation and social distancing and offers solutions that ensure continuity and connectivity. It also leads to feelings of detachment, alienation, uncertainty, ambiguity and fear. Consequently, higher education has to engage in (re)learning to teach during a crisis and an intense situation of abnormality.

One domain that requires deeper examination is that while higher education attempts to maintain some semblance of normality in curriculum delivery by moving their offerings online, the impact of these approaches is yet to be scientifically evaluated and their pedagogy appraised (Aristeidou & Herodotou 2020). As we try to mitigate the effects of the 2020 'lockdown' by invoking the well-intentioned discourse of online learning, we should clarify whether we are re-appraising the fundamentals of our pedagogies (as we should be doing) or responding in haste because we are unnerved by the pandemic.

5   Rethinking Teaching: (Re)Learning to Teach

Teaching in a post-pandemic world requires (re)learning and re-imagining, much like the shifts, for example, from orality to literacy and then to a combination of literacy and orality (Friesen 2018). Other examples are Kittler's discourse on 'inscriptions within a discourse network' (1990: xvii) and Foucault's 'episteme' (2005: xxiii), which make evident that each period in history has its 'way of constructing, storing, and transmitting knowledge' (Friesen 2018: 2).

When knowledge construction regimes and practices are disrupted, existing habits and rituals are disturbed too, signifying that learning or (re)learning has to take place for continuity and, at times, even discontinuity. Thomas Kuhn's (1970), 'The structure of scientific revolutions', is a testament to erasure (unlearning) and starting again (re)learning, when a paradigm shifts and destabilises existing praxis. According to Kuhn, 'to desert the paradigm is to cease practicing the science that defines it' (1970: 34). It also requires a questioning and rethinking of 'received beliefs' and assumptions (1970: 4). There is now a pandemic-induced paradigm shift in higher education, necessitating the asking of new questions, finding new solutions and rethinking the purpose of academe. Moreover, it is an opportunity to revisit the viability of existing pedagogy approaches knowing that we are unlikely to 'cease practicing' the science of teaching and learning. However, we should, at least, question the assumptions that underpin our practices.

Existing higher education pedagogies operate on assumptions based on decades of teaching rituals and experiences: the teacher is the knower, the student is the learner; teachers are the knowledge producers and students, the consumers; teachers keep up with the latest developments and technologies while students are the learners about the latest developments and technologies. However, the present cohort of students represent an anomaly, challenging all our assumptions (Jones 2008). Most of them are leading 'technology saturated lives' (Lenhart *et al.* 2015), in other words, they do not need teaching about the use of technology[8]. In fact, the history of technology innovation was driven

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[8] We acknowledge that in some settings and backgrounds, there are individuals who have limited exposure to technology and will require orientation. In higher education institutions, these are offered through generic modules and supplementary support programmes rather than by disciplines (although there

by students, viz., Mark Zuckerberg, Bill Gates and Paul Gardner Allen, and the college dropouts, Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak. Furthermore, knowledge and refutations and contestations thereof are available on multiple fora, allowing students to challenge the core tenets of disciplines and their histories (see e.g. Dhunpath, Amin & Devroop 2018). Students are more familiar with technological developments than most higher education teachers. These assumptions are not consequences of the crisis we face; they have been present for quite a while. Students are not empty vessels (Lukacs & Galluzzo 2014), they are critical thinkers and can contribute meaningfully to knowledge production (Low 2017; Zyngier 2007) and are aware of future imperatives (Amin 2016) than we give them credit.

Given the transforming relationships between the knowers (teachers) and the known (students), we have to acknowledge that it is the *discrepancies* between assumptions and realities, which constitute the 'core of the crisis' (Kuhn 1970: 69). In other words, we are being distracted by the pandemic crisis from recognising our contributions to the challenges we face. Once again, we turn to Kuhn to understand what needs to be done: we have to engage in 'picking up the other end of the stick' (1970: 85) – that is, we have to invert student and teacher roles, (students teach and teachers learn) and also expand the teacher student roles (both teach and both learn). The implication is that we have to be guided by students when it comes to the use of technology. Students, we know, can sustain interest and engagement on the internet and social media for hours whilst there continue to be debates about the length of students' attention spans (Bradbury 2016). While Bradbury (2016) debunks *Time Magazine*'s finding that it is just eight seconds long, he does not offer a time span; instead, he asks and explains:

> What is different between a live and recorded event is the emotional buy-in. Certainly books, or even videos, can be excellent media for conveying content, but a live teacher can inspire a student to think more about a subject and delve deeper into content than can be achieved by passive media alone. Motivational speakers know this very well, and many make a remarkably good living by giving live

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may be specific discipline-based technologies like GIS for Geography). However, once students are inducted into technology, they have access to knowledge just as those whose lives are 'technology saturated'.

presentations. Certainly charisma helps in generating excitement about a subject in students, but probably the biggest aspect of inspiring students is passion for the subject on the part of the teacher. Lectures are one place where a teacher can model intellectual, personal, and moral values (Bradbury 2016: 512-513).

In effect, it is worth considering that learning from students about technology will not lead to teachers being displaced in the lecture room or virtual space. In fact, teaching could be more effective when student interest is combined with the skills and knowledge of technology-savvy teachers who exude passion and share their values, and we hasten to add, address student experiences of social injustice, marginalisation and exclusion. The 'live teacher' has to be *alive* (sensitive) to cultural differences, dissimilar socioeconomic backgrounds, sentiments raised decades ago by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1999; 1995) and still worth following in the virtual age.

There is no standard recipe for how or what to (re)learn. There are multiple factors, e.g. the context of teaching, academic disciplines, and availability of technologies that will influence a change of teaching tactic. (Re)learning, by implication, entails modifications, amendments, erasures and expansion of the norms that have underpinned and regulated teaching in higher education.

6 (Re)Learning as Pharmakon

(Re)learning to teach in higher education is not a neutral intervention as it involves intent, choice and consequence. It is an uncertain endeavour as interests, passions, and competencies are individually-based preferences. Habermas (1968) identified three interests in relation to knowledge: technical, practical and emancipatory. Similar interests apply to and persist in (re)learning to teach during and for a crisis. Technical (re)learning is characterised by substituting one practice by another e.g. replacing a face-to-face lecture with a pre-recorded one. A practical approach is characterised by acceptance of the limitations of a situation and finding ways to cope e.g. making copies of texts and posting those online for easy access by students. An emancipatory (re)learning approach is underpinned by critical reflexivity and transformation e.g. revising the curriculum so that it is relevant to, significant for and consistent with students' present needs and future aspirations – an education

that prepares them for a successful life, not just for a qualification or a career. It is possible that interests could be combined in various ways, e.g., practical and technical or technical and emancipatory. It is possible, too, that one approach is not used consistently lending an undecidable character to the matter of (re)learning.

The notion of undecidability can be traced to the philosophy of Jacques Derrida, the Algerian-born, French scholar and the Greek word 'pharmakon' (see Derrida 1981). The Greek word is characterised by dual meanings in opposition to each other, namely, 'poison' and 'cure', a typical feature of the logocentric convention and binary logic of western language. From a logocentric (speech/ word-centred) perspective, the meaning of, for example, 'true' is only understood when paired and compared to 'untrue/false'. Western conventions of language are fragile and vulnerable to ambiguity and misconception as it is a confounding and inappropriate medium to represent reality (Rorty 2008). The implication is that as much as we try to explain the notion of (re)learning, we are confronted by the limitations of language to express and represent the complexities, the ironies, contradictions and ambiguities inherent in the notion. Derrida's interpretation of pharmakon offers an alternative logic to understand the effects of the limitations of the language conventions we apply.

Pharmakon is more complex, as it captures the presence of a binary opposition within a single word creating a situation of ambiguity and undecidability. Additionally, both the benefit and harm generated by the pharmakon affects the same person concurrently. The pharmakon is the culprit that produces the cure/poison binary resulting in uncertainty, ambiguity and undecidability. In that sense, (re)learning to teach is the pharmakon. It is both useful and harmful at the same time. The pandemic has created an unusual situation where the usual modes of practice have to be suspended. To cope with the 'new normal', new knowledges, skills, and competencies have to be acquired. (Re)learning, from that perspective, is beneficial for professional growth. But (re)learning creates anxieties about what, how and whom to learn from. (Re)learning takes up time that further burdens an overworked, isolated cohort whose sense of certainty and knowing about teaching have been destabilised. Thus (re)learning has a harmful dimension. (Re)learners benefit and are harmed simultaneously. The same argument applies, for example, to the use of technology (Adams 2017; Lewin 2016; Kern 2014), discourses of professionalism (Marom & Ruitenberg 2018) and second language learning

(Lombard 2016), indicating the presence in education of multiple pharmakons at play. It may explain the reasons for the uneven teaching and learning outcomes. Crucially, (re)learning as pharmakon produces an inescapable possible-impossible binary. The latter point explains our reluctance in this chapter firstly, to answer all the questions posed and secondly, to postulate a recipe for (re)learning to teach.

7 Looking Forward …

We have provided a topography of some of the complications and complexities that accompany higher education's efforts to function without interruption, albeit differently. A landscape changed by a crisis requires a change of tactic. Experience, credentials, and tacit and explicit knowledge are insufficient and even inappropriate preparation to teach differently. We will need the assistance, competencies and skills that students possess to overcome some of the challenges faced during a crisis and add those to our repertoires. We will have to unlearn and (re)learn whilst keeping in mind the helpful and harmful effects that are immanent in those endeavours. To (re)learn to teach asks that those who teach in higher education do so with creativity, celerity and sagacity whilst being aware that ambiguity, complexity and the possible-impossible binary stalk all efforts. Social isolation, physical distancing, rapid changes and technological developments demand quick responses, actions in the face of fear, and the generation of solutions that work, even if the effects are undecidable. Despite seismic shifts elsewhere in our lives, we can responsibly approach the project of (re)learning for relevance by conceding that change is necessary. We may also have to step back and reflect to move forward. Whether we react with speed or act with caution, there will be risks and benefits, but higher education can no longer insulate itself from change.

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Online Pedagogy in Teacher Education:
A *Dis*affection for Affection in Times of Crisis?

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Abstract

This chapter argues for the need for teacher educators' professional development (TEPD) in online teaching. It starts by revealing the challenges teacher educators encountered during the forced shift to online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic due to the lack of emotional connectedness. Based on empirical data generated from a case study of four teacher educators from different subject areas, this chapter reveals that knowledge of technology does not ascertain a smooth transition to the online mode. Instead, we argue that formal training to identify and address the emotions of teacher educators and students while teaching online is crucial for student engagement and effective cognitive outcomes. Finally, informed by Zembylas' 'emotional ecology' model, we suggest that Mishra and Koehler's TPCK framework has limitations and that integrating the emotional dimension is necessary. The revised framework means that TPCK becomes TPECK, that is, Technological Pedagogical Emotional Content Knowledge, and hence a more comprehensive framework for teacher educators' professional development. This chapter's contribution is an expansion of TPCK to TPECK with a visual to capture the idea.

Keywords: online pedagogy, teacher education, emotional connectedness, TPCK, professional development

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Covid-19: The Scene in Teacher Education

Since Covid-19 swept the globe, technology has taken centre stage in higher educational institutions, with teaching and learning shifting to online platforms. Much has been written about the effectiveness of technology as a pedagogical resource (Arkorful & Abaidoo 2015; Arunachalam 2019; Palvia *et al.* 2018; Trust & Horrocks 2017), and there is little doubt that technological resources have prevented the educational sphere from coming to a standstill. As Duncan and Young (2009) point out, online teaching and learning provide an excellent alternative in education, particularly when there are hindrances to traditional learning situations. There is increasing recognition that the pandemic is not nearly eradicated and that our world will be more frequently assailed by pandemics (Scudellari 2020). In the face of this 'new normal', it is thus improbable that the educational sphere will revert to conventional teaching methods in the near future, and online teaching and learning is bound to remain the norm for an extensive period.

What has the change to online teaching entailed for teacher educators who are attuned to face-to-face teaching? How sound was the assumption that teacher educators, the drivers of teacher development programmes, would be able to adapt their pedagogy in line with the new modality? These questions become particularly pertinent in the light of extant literature pointing to,

(i)   the breadth of knowledge required by teacher educators due to the scope of their responsibilities (Olsen & Buchanan 2017; Lunenberg *et al.* 2014);

(ii) the lack of attention paid to the professional development of teacher educators who join the tertiary sector with teaching experience in schools and no formal preparation (Tack *et al.* 2018; Lunenberg *et al.* 2014; Goodwin & Kosnik 2013; Koster *et al.* 2008);

(iii) the silence of researchers (Koster *et al.* 2008) and perceived lethargy of policymakers with regards to TEPD, despite the challenges encountered by teacher educators while transiting to their new roles in higher education (Tack *et al.* 2018); and, finally,

(iv) the fact that many teacher educators lack confidence and competence concerning online teaching (Uerz *et al.* 2018), especially if they have to deal with a strong display of emotions, such as anger and rage, by students (McKnight 2013).

We became conscious of the predicament teacher educators faced during a case study we had previously conducted on the same topic[1] at the Mauritius Institute of Education. The initial study involved twelve teacher educators from different subject areas who had been interviewed about their online teaching experiences during the lockdown. While much emphasis is generally laid on the significance of technological know-how for online teaching, data from four teacher educators surprisingly revealed that the mastery of technology does not necessarily entail an automatic acceptance of and a smooth transition to the online mode. Thus, these teacher educators stood out due to the interesting paradox they brought to light and that, we believe, deserves further scrutiny for a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon. The data is presented in the form of vignettes which, in research, are generally used 'as elicitation tools' (Wilks 2004:80) to generate data (Gray *et al.* 2017; Hughes & Huby 2004; Sleed *et al.* 2002). In the case of this study, however, they are crisp yet textured write-ups used to present data vividly. Member checking (Creswell & Miller 2000) was carried out to ensure trustworthiness.

Voices of Teacher Educators
Vignette 1
Kevin has ten years of experience at the MIE. He is passionate about technological devices and always keeps abreast of the latest technological trends. When Microsoft 365 was made available to academics, Kevin was among the first to start using the applications. However, before the lockdown, he had not made use of any online teaching because he had not felt the need to do so. When the lockdown started, and academics were forced to migrate to online teaching, he felt a dissociation because of the urgency and lack of planning. Kevin acknowledges that technology is advantageous as switching to a distance mode helps overcome disruptions in the teaching and learning process. However, he does not see online teaching as an automatic substitute for face-to-face teaching since it has a totally different design. He found the process of online teaching quite challenging as the dynamics of face-to-face learning could not be achieved via this mode. Not only was the teaching and

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[1] Ankiah-Gangadeen, Mahadoe-Doorgakant & Goburdun – 'Covid-19: a liability or serendipity for teacher education? (2020).

learning process lengthier, but it entailed rethinking how the whole process – in terms of selection of content, delivery and interactional mechanisms – could be converted into the online mode. He also had difficulties fostering interaction among students, even with the smaller groups. He firmly believes that, at this stage, online teaching cannot truly replace face-to-face sessions.

Vignette 2

Hema joined the MIE as a teacher educator only a few months before confinement. She had previously taught in different tertiary institutions around the island on a part-time basis and had been involved in the use of Moodle. Even though she had eventually transformed some technological interfaces into pedagogical resources, she admits having found the experience to be quite daunting initially as she had to struggle to bridge the gap between the instructional realities during online teaching and the best practices used for face-to-face teaching. She had also found the whole process of preparing detailed online materials challenging and time-consuming. When considering the forced use of online teaching during the lockdown, she describes the experience as very stressful since academics were neither psychologically nor physically prepared to conduct all courses online. She was especially worried about her pre-primary trainees[2] , who were not conversant with technology and had been dragged into the online learning mode without being given the requisite support. Hema wonders how online learning can promote reflective, collaborative and interactive skills amongst learners given the crisis that all are facing. Nevertheless, she thinks that teacher educators can reinforce their ability to use online resources to allow trainees to develop a social community on virtual platforms. According to her, online learning offers a platform for trainees to interact with greater focus and intent.

Vignette 3

Rahul has been at the MIE for fourteen years but had engaged in some form of online teaching even before using platforms, such as Moodle, that were more easily accessible to his students. It had thus allowed him to experiment with blended teaching. Rahul is the go-to person in his department regarding

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[2] Trainee educators who work in pre-primary schools.

technological issues. He lists online learning as one of his research interests and has a good mastery of different technological devices. Despite being comfortable with online teaching, Rahul has found the whole experience of teaching online during the Covid 19 crisis challenging. One of the most difficult aspects of teaching online was seeing his pre-primary trainees grapple with Teams since the latter struggled with registering and logging onto the application. He also noted mixed responses to the use of technology. While some students felt more at ease with online oral presentations, others evaded online sessions since they had no audience.

Moreover, for Rahul, teaching online during the pandemic has been different as, before this, he could always count on seeing the trainees at some point during face-to-face sessions. Since this was not the case anymore, it changed how he interacted with them. To make learning meaningful for his trainees, Rahul resorted to a number of other media formats. He found the whole process daunting and demanding much work, and he spent more time preparing for online teaching than he would have for face-to-face sessions.

Vignette 4

Having joined the MIE ten years ago, Varsha admits that online teaching is not new to her. From the time she became a teacher educator, she used the Moodle platform for her classes. Although she is familiar with some Microsoft applications, such as Teams, she affirms never using them as she preferred the traditional face-to-face teaching approach. However, with the outbreak of Covid 19, she had no choice but to adopt the new mode of delivery into her teaching. As challenging as this has been, Varsha feels that she has fared well, successfully carrying out online presentations and discussions with large cohorts of primary[3] and pre-primary trainees.

To a great extent, she managed to achieve her objectives by exploring new avenues through interactive PowerPoint and the chat feature of Teams. She nevertheless concedes that preparing for online teaching is different from preparing for face-to-face sessions. Her greatest challenge has been finding ways to engage and support students for active and meaningful learning. Although technology has allowed her to set tasks for prior preparation (for example, for practical lessons, students watched videos and got acquainted

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[3] Trainee educators who work in primary schools.

with the procedure), it was inadequate for conveying certain concepts (like showing the consistency of a batter). These are best understood through first-hand experience.

Furthermore, while conducting her classes, she discovered limitations in her use of technology as she had to grapple with technical issues in developing simple videos to demonstrate practical lessons. Also, at times, she found it challenging to keep track of large cohorts of students who would log in to the platform but remain inactive. According to her, institutional support for technological and pedagogical training is necessary since not all teacher educators are well-versed in developing and delivering online resources and classes.

Understanding the Challenge of Teacher Educators: Insights from TPCK

The vignettes reveal that dispensing online pedagogy is not a simple matter of switching from one medium to another but requires specific knowledge systems. Therefore, the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPCK) framework[4] (Koehler *et al.* 2013; Mishra & Koehler 2006) was used as a baseline to unpack the data and analyse the experiences of the four teacher educators. According to Mishra & Koehler (2006: 1017), 'thoughtful pedagogical uses of technology require the development of a complex, situated form of knowledge that we call Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPCK)'. In their framework, they foreground 'the complex roles of, and interplay among, three main components of learning environments: content, pedagogy, and technology' (Mishra & Koehler 2006: 1017). Highlighting the inadequacy of merely introducing technology in the classroom (as other researchers have), the authors make a case for knowing how technology is used at the theoretical, pedagogical, and methodological levels. They rightly contend that technology cannot just be superimposed on existing frameworks but, instead, be made an integral part of these, given the interaction among the various constituents. Using Shulman's PCK model as a basis, Mishra and Koehler's framework (see Figure 1 below) delves into the intricacies of using technology as a tool for teaching by considering content,

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[4] Also referred to as the TPACK framework by the authors (See Mishra & Koehler 2009)

pedagogy and technology in isolation – thereby showing the importance of mastering each – as well as by articulating how closely technology should be embedded within teaching through the interplay of the different components to become a powerful tool for epistemic enterprises in the learning process. Thus, they view these components in pairs, namely: pedagogical content knowledge (PCK); technological content knowledge (TCK); technological pedagogical knowledge (TPK); and also, all three together, technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPCK).
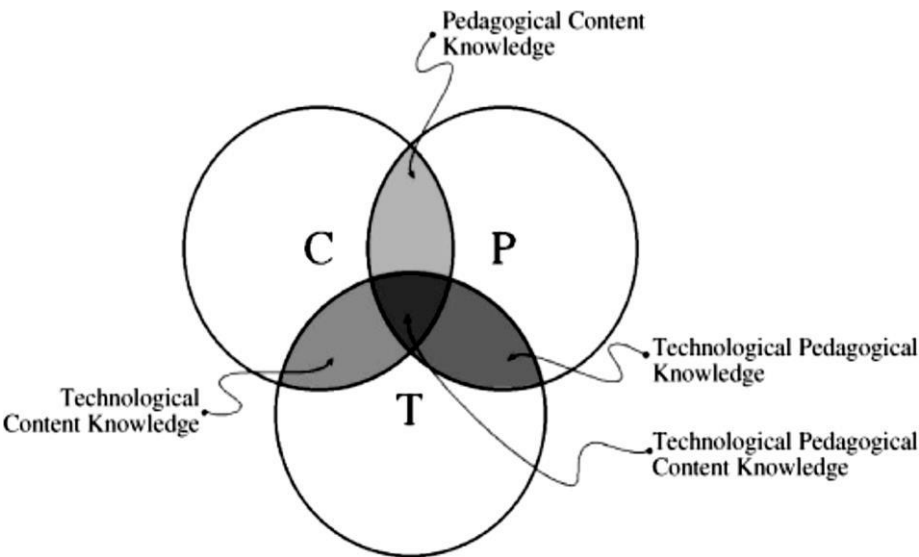
Figure 1: TPCK framework (Source: Mishra & Koehler 2006: 1025)

The TPCK framework is intricate and affords interesting insights into the types of knowledge pedagogues require to use technology effectively in their teaching. It reveals the need to know about technology (TK); the ability to determine the affordances and limitations of technology in relation to specific subjects or content (TCK) as well as the suitability of particular technological tools for the intended (pedagogical) purpose in a teaching/ learning setup (TPK). Finally, it requires the knowledge and skills to optimise technology for effective pedagogy in teaching content (TPCK).

Thus, the TPCK framework adequately makes the point that technology cannot merely be perceived as an 'add-on' tool or resource in pedagogical setups but should permeate every level of pedagogical know-how.

An analysis of the vignettes with respect to each level of the TPCK framework illuminated the reason for the teacher educators' struggle during online teaching. The grid below provides an overview of the analysis.

Table 1: Overview of analysis of vignettes

Framework Level	Evidence in the Vignettes
TK	**Kevin:** always keeps abreast with the latest technological trends **Hema:** had been involved in the use of Moodle **Rahul:** good mastery of different technological devices **Varsha:** online teaching is not new to her
TCK	**Kevin:** **-** technology is advantageous as switching to a distance mode helps overcome disruptions in the teaching and learning process - difficulties in fostering interaction **Hema:** - online learning offers a platform for trainees to interact with greater focus and intent - wonders how online learning can promote reflective, collaborative and interactive skills amongst learners **Rahul:** - some students felt more at ease with online oral presentations since they had no audience, while others evaded online sessions - Before this, he could always count on seeing the trainees at some point. Since this was not the case anymore, it changed how he interacted with them. **Varsha:** - managed to achieve her objectives by exploring new avenues through the use of interactive PowerPoint and the

	chat feature of Teams - It was inadequate with respect to conveying certain concepts (like showing the consistency of a batter), which are best understood through first-hand experience Her greatest challenge has been to find ways to engage and support students for active and meaningful learning.
TPK	**Kevin:** entailed rethinking how the whole process – in terms of selection of content, delivery and interactional mechanisms – could be converted into the online mode **Hema:** had eventually transformed some technological interfaces into pedagogical resources **Rahul:** To make learning meaningful for his trainees … resorted to a number of other media **Varsha**: had fared well, successfully managing to carry out online presentations and discussions with large cohorts of primary and pre-primary trainees
TPCK	Have TK, TCK and TPK, yet: **Kevin:** difficulties fostering interaction **Hema:** wonders how online learning can promote reflective, collaborative and interactive skills **Rahul:** before this, he could always count on seeing the trainees at some point. Since this was not the case anymore, it changed how he interacted with them. **Varsha:** her greatest challenge has been to find ways to engage and support students for active and meaningful learning

What resonates in the vignettes is that all four teacher educators were already familiar with technology, and three had previously used it as a pedagogical resource. For the TPCK framework, it can therefore be said that they had TK. The TCK is also evidenced through the teacher educators' critical stance towards technology and their ability to identify its potential and liabilities.

They all displayed PCK as they acted upon the understanding that online teaching required a different approach to face-to-face teaching, even though they faced certain difficulties in the process. Nevertheless, all four found the sudden shift to online teaching challenging and arduous due to their perceived lack of student engagement and inability to foster interaction. These

findings echo those in the study of Burke (2020: 5), which reveal that 'While it was clear that all participants held the goal of connecting with their students and engaging them in meaningful learning, this was not always seen as achievable'. The complexities of establishing an interactive online environment cannot be downplayed as these affect the efficacy of teaching and learning.

Change in any circumstance is generally unsettling. So, whilst the anxiety displayed in the current study may be significantly attributed to the unsettling circumstances in which the new modality had been resorted to, it may also be symptomatic of a more fundamental issue, namely the impact on the teacher educators' inherent beliefs about teaching and learning. It would appear that their practices as teacher educators, and their beliefs about teaching and learning, were forged in predominantly traditional classroom setups that fostered a connection between them and their learners through the proximity that physical presence breeds. Engaging with students through the interface of a 'screen' or application was troubling as it engendered a form of alienation from their learners. Online presence fails to compensate for the physical distance, especially since learners cannot always be seen. As such, facial expressions or silences cannot be deciphered to gauge their affective state, engagement in the lesson, or understanding of concepts. The emotional disconnect in online environments may dampen interaction and cause student disengagement, undermining the teaching/learning process. Gilmore and Warren (2007: 581) reveal how,

> the absence of the body dimension, of paralingual cues and removal of physical social-spatial indicators, force a renegotiation of the 'feelings rules' that govern traditional classroom settings, which in turn contributes to a more emotionally suffused teaching experience for online tutors.

The distancing becomes even more disconcerting when learners struggle to manage the devices and applications. In short, an online connection does not automatically result in human connection, thereby obliterating much of the affective dimension in pedagogy. Nevertheless, the literature on online teaching or online pedagogy mainly focuses on technical know-how in terms of knowledge of content, pedagogy or technology (Trammell & Laforge 2017; Wright & Malcolm 2010; De Simone 2006; Solem *et al.* 2006; Beason 2005). Meanwhile, the significance of conducive relationships between teachers and

learners (benefits concurrent with the pedagogy of caring) and fostering this on a different platform is marginalised. On the contrary, we aver that it should be foregrounded and addressed directly rather than subsumed under the broader domain of pedagogy.

Uncovering the Limitations of the TPCK Framework

Data analysis using TPCK uncovered the limitations of the framework. It was evident that although the teacher educators possessed the different types of knowledge deemed essential, they still faced hurdles. While Covid-19 has shown the importance of technology in attenuating social distance, it has drawn attention to the resulting emotional distancing between teacher educators and their learners. It has even brought to light the disarray of established professionals who have already built a repertoire of teaching experiences. Dyment *et al.* (2013: 139) correctly assert that 'building social engagement (online) may involve a level of orchestration that is not normally required on campus'. Successful teaching and learning rely extensively on the bond between teachers and learners and the rapport they share; this requires pedagogical skills that blend the technological and affective domains. In a study involving adult learners on a 30-week online course, Zembylas (2008) identified various emotions experienced by the participants. It is noteworthy that, among the negative emotions are alienation and the lack of connectedness – aspects highlighted and discussed above related to the current study. This study thus confirms that online learning is intricately tied to emotions, and vice versa, thereby pointing to the need for emotions to feature conspicuously in online pedagogy.

However, studies reveal that even though the connection between emotion and learning, or emotion and cognition is now acknowledged (Goleman 2004; O'Regan 2003), it tends to be sidelined in online learning in adult and higher education spheres (Stephan *et al.* 2019; Zembylas 2008), especially teacher education (O'Regan 2003). O'Regan (2003: 89) thus rightly stated that,

> (given) the centrality of emotion to the process of learning, specifically here of learning online … any theory of learning which fails to take account of this centrality is lacking a critical element and is, therefore, seriously deficient in its representation of reality.

Notably, the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework (Garrison *et al.* 2000 in Swan *et al.* 2009) grounded in Dewey's philosophy of education is premised on the belief that 'effective online learning, especially higher-order learning, requires the development of community, and that such development is not a trivial challenge in the online environment' (Swan *et al.* 2009: 4-5). Consequently, two of the three core elements in the model (social presence and teaching presence) underscore social and emotional connection in an online environment (Cleveland-Innes & Campbell 2012). There is little doubt that these directly feed into the third element (cognitive presence) since, as Cleveland-Innes and Campbell (2012: 271) opine, '(e)motions … are a double-edged sword that may help or hinder learning'.

Although Mishra and Koehler took Shulman's PCK model a step further by integrating technology (TPCK), they failed to cater for the intricacies of online pedagogy fully, even despite the recognition that using 'technology per se does not lead to student learning since its effectiveness is entirely dependent on the teaching approaches used *in conjunction* with it' (Mishra & Koehler 2009: 15). What Mishra and Koehler disregarded was the emotional impact of technology on the teaching and learning process, substantiating Ball *et al.*'s (2008: 389) claim that,

> Although the term pedagogical content knowledge is widely used, its potential has only been thinly developed. Many seem to assume that its nature and content are obvious. Yet what is meant by pedagogical content knowledge is unspecified.

This lapse becomes even more blatant at a time when online teaching is becoming more widespread and emphasises the notion that technological possibilities, instead of pedagogical principles, drive the focus of online learning (Serdyukov 2015; Harasim 2012; Levine & Sun 2003). Thus, while the TPCK framework considers technology entering the teaching space, it does not adequately fulfil the needs for teacher educator development.

Mitigating the Limitations of the TPCK Framework through TPECK

Adult learners, in particular, need to be emotionally comfortable with the learning situation for learning to occur (Berenson *et al.* 2008). Thus, we maintain

that careful consideration of the affective domain in online teaching and learning would help teacher educators be better prepared for the shift in modality and foster a rapport with their students via the interface of technological resources. Attending to emotions enables both the students and the teacher educator to manage feelings and provides practical methods to address difficulties that could deter success. With respect to teaching, the affective domain would operate at two levels, more specifically, 'in empowering teacher educators to 'interact with students to build a relationship (and to appeal) to the affective attributes of students as a deliberate form of engagement' (Birbeck & Andre 2009: 41), thereby impacting positively on cognition. By foregrounding the role of emotions in teaching and learning, the affective domain would add value to the TPCK framework as a supplement to the technical knowledge base it develops. For an enhanced conversation between Shulman, Mishra and Koehler, and teacher education, we thus extend the TPCK framework to TPECK, that is, Technological Pedagogical Emotional Content Knowledge, so that the significance of emotions in the teaching and learning process gains due prominence. The modified framework illustrated in Figure 2 is put forth as a framework for TEPD, filling the gap related to formal preparation in online teaching.
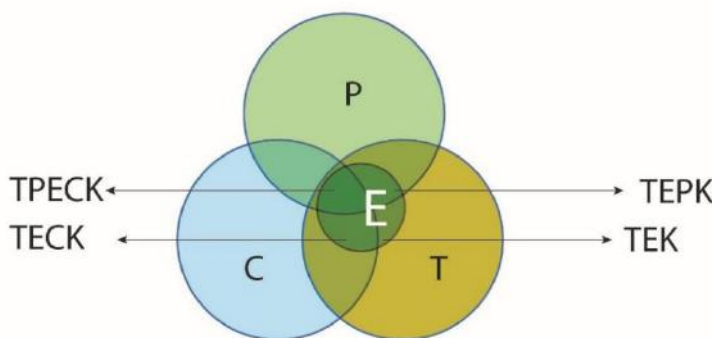
Figure 2: TPECK framework

In the TPECK framework, emotions are viewed with technological, pedagogical and content knowledge. Thus, we argue for the central role of emotions in the proposed framework for TEPD in online teaching. This is

informed by the concept of emotional ecology that Zembylas uses to enrich PCK, which 'in the context of education indicates how teachers and students create the environment that shapes how they are emotionally connected and engaged in learning together' (2007: 357). Zembylas (2007) classifies emotions along three planes, namely, individual (feelings experienced and expressed by the teacher), relational (the teacher's use of emotional knowledge to develop a relationship with learners) and socio-political (the influence of emotional knowledge of the institutional and cultural contexts on curricular decisions and actions). Zembylas' classification speaks to the data presented earlier in the chapter on all three planes: at the individual level (the teacher educators' disarray of online teaching was evident); at the relational level (the difficulties of building a rapport and establishing interaction online was brought out repeatedly); and at the socio-political level (lockdown and social distancing due to Covid-19 leading to the policy decision to adopt online teaching). As per Zembylas' model, the interaction among elements from all three planes led to a situation where teaching and learning were impaired following the change in modality.

As a framework for teacher educators' development, TPECK aims to empower teacher educators through a consideration of Technological Emotional Knowledge (TEK), Technological Emotional Content Knowledge (TECK), and Technological Emotional Pedagogical Knowledge (TEPK).

Technological Emotional Knowledge
Technological Emotional Knowledge refers to the way teacher educators and students feel due to the use of technology or in the process of using it. Emotions aroused are likely to vary in individuals and may, for instance, range from enthusiasm to reluctance or confidence to frustration – depending on such factors as teaching and learning styles and attitude towards or beliefs about technology. The TEK makes teacher educators conscious of their emotions and those of their students. It also highlights the importance of considering these emotions, given their impact on the degree of motivation for or involvement in online sessions (Wosnitza & Volet 2005).

Technological Emotional Content Knowledge
Technological Emotional Content Knowledge develops the teacher educators'

understanding of how students relate to technology-mediated content. The appeal of different content areas is apt to vary according to individuals, as reflected in the degree of emotional engagement (Schindler *et al.* 2017) displayed by learners. While some aspects of the content may be interesting, others may be uninspiring. In the case of online teaching and learning, the interplay between technology and content may be that not only does each element evoke emotions on its own (that is, the learner's feelings about technology and about the content being taught) but also with each other (that is, feelings aroused by technology may influence the learner's response to the content or vice versa). For example, in line with Krashen's Affective Filter hypothesis (Krashen 1982), which highlights the relationship between affective variables and language learning, the stress generated by limited technological know-how may hinder learning. Thus, TECK is essential to enhance the teacher educator's discernment while identifying avenues and limitations in online teaching regarding particular content.

Technological Emotional Pedagogical Knowledge
Technological Emotional Pedagogical Knowledge equips teacher educators with the requisite knowledge and skills to identify and manage their emotions and those of their students during online teaching. It also develops their ability to adopt an online pedagogy of caring by attributing a central place to emotions in the teaching and learning process. Among others, it involves establishing a conducive online environment, establishing and sustaining rapport with students despite physical distance, being attentive and responsive to students' state of mind and needs, motivating students and sustaining interest through a judicious choice of techniques.

Technological Pedagogical Emotional Content Knowledge
At the nexus of TEK, TECK and TEPK lie Technological Pedagogical Emotional Content Knowledge, where the interplay of the various components is played out. Through TPECK, teacher educators develop sensitivity and learn to address emotions during online teaching through an astute choice of teaching approaches. Thus, TPECK stands as a comprehensive framework that equips teacher educators with the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to promote emotional engagement during online teaching.

Conclusion

In this study, we highlighted the challenges teacher educators faced during online teaching despite their knowledge of technology and uncovered the limitations of the TPCK framework. We argued that, although the content and technological know-how are essential elements in online teaching, operating beyond the confines of a traditional classroom poses undeniable challenges for teacher educators when establishing and maintaining interaction with their learners. Establishing effective communication channels anchored in affective considerations is crucial in an online environment to allay student disengagement and hence teacher educators' dilemma. Consequently, there was an acute need for TEPD to allow teacher educators to develop the requisite knowledge base for online pedagogy. It would help bring about more willingness and ease to conduct online teaching since teacher educators would be equipped with complex knowledge, skills and necessary attitudes underlying effective online pedagogy. As such, we extended the TPCK framework to TPECK by including emotions for a more comprehensive knowledge base to conduct online teaching in teacher education.

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How Will or Should the COVID-19 Pandemic Change Higher Education?

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has substantially disrupted virtually all segments of society and has affected most profoundly, minoritized and other groups of oppressed and under-served people. Educational institutions, at all levels, are facing unprecedent challenges for sustaining operations, making it difficult to meet the expanded demands to address historically intractable issues of social justice and equity. Framed by concepts related to the professionalisation and latticing of higher education institutional operations, this chapter explores the experiences of three participant-observers affiliated with a large, public US research university—a professor/senior administrator; doctoral student/part-time instructor; and a full time professional academic advisor—related to the pandemic disruption that came during a time of broader, although not as acute disruptions within the sector. Reflections on these experiences culminate with recommendations for building a better 'new normal.'

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic; US higher education; higher education disruptive forces; administrative lattice; professionalisation of university administration; participant-observer case-study

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1 Introduction

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education institutions across the United States were experiencing a range of what were considered 'disruptive forces.' Embedded within a largely market-driven system, with state financial support scaled down notably since the Great Recession (2007 - 2009), higher costs to students triggered a national student loan debt crisis. More recently, demographic-related enrolment declines have led to a pending 'enrolment cliff' (Grawe 2018). Simultaneously, advances in information and communications technologies have been reshaping student and staff experiences and expectations for how education and support systems and services are organised and delivered.

This chapter was written when countries were in the difficult position of maintaining practices to limit contagion while re-opening their economies to mitigate the largest loss of jobs and income since the Great Depression of the 1930s. This global situation was compounded in the United States by nationwide protests over the longstanding injustice and mistreatment of people of colour ignited by the murders by police of several Black men and women, and particularly the murder of George Floyd. Although aimed primarily at policing, these protests implicate systemic racism within all institutions, including education at all levels. The public health, financial, and social disruptions U.S. institutions of higher education (IHEs) now face is unprecedent, leading some scholars to predict that there will be a significant contraction in the entire sector (Galloway 2020).

This chapter considers the types of disruption we were facing before the pandemic, how the pandemic has forced us to make changes and the choices we must make about just making it through or instead using the opportunity to make lasting changes toward a system that better educates and prepares diverse learners. Those choices are not dichotomies but a basis for strategy: the individuals whose activities comprise the work of the academy will have to make choices about what to prioritise.

This article provides reflections of 'participant-observers' to describe the experiences of three university staff with regard to the pre-COVID-19 realities, the time during the disruption, and the preparations for a 'new normal.' All three staff are from a large, public research university located in the Midwestern United States. The case study design employed in this chapter serves both intrinsic and instrumental purposes. Intrinsically, we provide a thick description, allowing the reader to interpret and decide the applicability

to their own circumstances. Toward that end, the narratives are intentionally subjective: reflecting both the thoughts and feelings of the narrators. Instrumentally, we use the case studies to describe several possible negative and positive trajectories that we believe are more generalisable. To frame our reflections, we first consider how HEIs prepare for disasters and the latticed expansion of professionalised administration in the United States. Finally, we take up Winston Churchill's adage to 'never let a good crisis go to waste', and provide our own judgments as to best way that higher education institutions can leverage the COVID-19 disruption to reform longstanding, entrenched issues that hamper student learning and institutional effectiveness.

2 Background and Framing Perspective

In this section we first provide background on the U.S. context for crisis management among higher education institutions to provide the reader with a sense of the administrative infrastructure found at most institutions that is especially well-developed among public universities (which enrol about 75% of all students in U.S. postsecondary education) but also at larger private colleges and universities.

2.1 Crisis Management at U.S. Universities and Large Colleges

The published literature on reactions by U.S. higher education institutions to emergencies, disruptions and crises include many case studies about recovery from natural disasters, such as hurricanes and earthquakes; human tragedies, like mass shootings; and financial crises, like the great recession of 2007-09. Case-specific studies provide useful information from institutional leaders who have weathered such crises. Reviews of these studies and broader based research and scholarship related to crisis management identifies important themes that provide leadership with information useful for crisis planning and management. Most U.S. institutions of higher education have established administrative and operational divisions for public health, environmental safety, risk management, and disaster recovery. The continuing development of these capacities has been bolstered by a series of studies and guidebooks that provide guidance to institutions for setting up such infrastructure.

For example, using theories of evolutionary organisational change and a collective case study methodology, Shaw (2017) identifies seven factors as

the principle determinants of institutional success in dealing with such disruptions. Four of those factors related to the timing and length of crisis (specific timing in relation to key processes, recovery priorities, initial impact of event, and institutional knowledge/memory) and three to the broader resources available to institutions experiencing such crises (status within a larger institutional system, existing community partnerships, knowledge of external resources). In short, Shaw recommends that institutions focus on two key strategies: shortening the length of the crisis and accruing resources needed to recover normal operations.

An earlier analysis by Mitroff, Diamond and Alpaslan (2006) lists 14 different crises most encountered, the first of which is highly relevant to the current crisis: serious outbreaks of illness. Their list also includes natural disasters, fires, financial losses, sabotage, lawsuits, significant reputation loss, and terrorist attacks. They point out that most crises include a precipitating disaster followed by '… a complex chain of crises that the originating catastrophe sets off' (2006: 62). Due to the variety and complexity of these potential crises, they recommend that institutions develop crisis management teams and plans that include a diverse portfolio of response and communication strategies for the diverse crises that an IHE can encounter. Based on a survey of chief academic officers, they find that institutions were most well prepared for such common disasters as fires, lawsuits and crimes, and least well prepared for environmental disasters (e.g., release of toxic chemicals) and athletic scandals. Among less common crises, institutions were relatively well prepared for terrorism but less so for sabotage.

Several well-known and cited systems have been proposed for helping IHEs and other large, complex service organisations develop their crisis management strategies and capacities. Two popular guidebooks, (Coombs 2014; Heath & O'Hair 2010) focus on the role of communication as a core component of crisis management. Other treatments focus on how crisis affects specific functions of higher education, such as admissions processes (Booker 2014) and budget and finance (National Association for College and University Business Officers 2020). The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has a website providing guidance to college and university campuses regarding how to prepare for and deal with varying crises (https://www.ready.gov/campus).

These examples of studies and resources are provided to underscore the point that colleges and universities throughout the United States (the focus of this paper), have been paying significant attention to developing strategies

and capacities for natural and human-made disasters and crises. Most institutions have crisis management teams and plans, many of which have been tested and adjusted in response to the common range of disasters that IHEs must navigate. Professional crisis management staff advance their field at professional meetings of such organisations as the American College Health Association (ASHA), the University Risk Management and Assurance Association (URIMA) and the National Emergency Management Association. However, in some significant ways, the current pandemic represents unchartered territory, even for institutions that have dealt with common crises, including natural disasters, public health crises, fires, and scandals of varying sorts. Unlike most such crises, the 2020 pandemic is far more widespread (affecting virtually all institutions and, more importantly, students and staff), long-term (already in place six months as of this writing, with at least another six months until widespread recovery is possible), and covering multiple realms (public health, economics and, especially in the United States, social justice).

Institutional crisis management capacities, developed to respond to the broad range of disasters and catastrophes that colleges and universities commonly face, have been instrumental to the responses of U.S. colleges and universities to the current health, economic and social justice pandemic now confronting most institutions. To further complicate matters, the multi-layered public governmental response (local, state, and federal), has not been particularly well-coordinated within the country, with states taking the lead (as constitutionally mandated) for many aspects of public health matters, local officials given leeway, to varying degrees across localities, for invoking stricter measures, and the federal response ranging from very specific guidance provided by the U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) to contrasting and often contradictory messages coming from the political leadership. As a result, there are very large regional differences in response regulations and behaviours across the country.

Although the geo-politics of the pandemic are well beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to note the context for this analysis, within a state considered to be solid 'red' (Republican party dominated) that has taken a pragmatic and comparatively well-coordinated approach with fairly consistent messaging and, more importantly, close coordination between university, local and state officials involved in managing the response. Up until the most recent weeks, our state has not had any of the types of surges seen in many other parts of the country. However, there are some signs that we may see a new wave in

the coming weeks.

The establishment, professionalisation, and expansion of crisis management teams at U.S. institutions of higher education, while directly relevant to the experience of the pandemic, is also more generally indicative of a broader trend in the sector that was described by two prominent U.S. higher education finance scholars, Robert Zemsky and William Massy, as the academic ratchet and administrative lattice.

2.2 *The Academic Ratchet and Administrative Lattice*

Student fees for attending college in the U.S. began to rise rapidly during the last 20 years of the 20th Century. By the end of the 1980s, higher education scholars were beginning to examine issues related to cost increases and cost containment. Among such scholars, Robert Zemsky and William Massy (Zemsky & Massy 1990; 1994) described the closely inter-related trends of lattice-like proliferation and entrenchment of administrative staffing and ratcheting down of the faculty member role to primarily academic disciplinary matters. They argued further that these concurrent trends have had deleterious effects on cost containment and quality. Specifically, they noted that responsibility for tasks faculty members traditionally performed related to institutional goals (student recruitment, instructional design, student affairs, libraries, etc.) were shifted to professional administrators and their staff. The increased professionalisation of such areas as advising, instructional design, learning technologies, budgeting, and finance, compounded by the concurrent growth in regulation and compliance requirements, had the simultaneous effects of increasing costs and diffusing responsibility for decision making to the point of obscuring transparency and accountability.

The professionalisation of higher education administration has invoked a web of new careers, specialties, and identities within the academy. As noted earlier, a host of professional associations serve the professional development needs of college public safety, public health, and risk management staff. Similar associations exist for academic advisors, student affairs professionals, instructional designers, enrolment management profess-sionals, institutional researchers, assessment practitioners, teaching and learn-ing centre staff, budget officers, information management professionals, and so on. As these higher education professions mature, they develop higher level and more nuanced professional standards and methods for operation. Members

of the profession join national panels to consider laws, regulations, and reporting requirements within the specific higher education profession. These professions become so ingrained that they spawn graduate training programs: the first author's own department offers a master's degree in student affairs administration and certificates in institutional research and academic advising. Recent developments have seen the realm of college advising divide into separate sub-professions related to academic, career, and financial advising, as well as 'life-coaching'.

The concurrent academic ratchet trend shifts the time, attention, and responsibility of faculty members to their academic specialty and the colleagues with whom they collaborate and form scholarly communities with nationally and internationally. Students, and especially those in graduate programs, enter the socialisation stream of this ratchet, preparing papers for national disciplinary associations, learning the language and epistemologies of their chosen discipline or profession. It is also important to note that, there has been a large shift in student enrolment since the mid-1980s, away from the traditional academic disciplines and toward professional courses of study. Figure 1 illustrates this transition showing that the traditional academic disciplines and professions (the arts & sciences and training for engineering, agriculture and education), have shifted from accounting for over three quarters (77%) down to one-half (50%) of bachelor degrees conferred, while the relatively newer and emerging professions (business, health fields, and other professional services), have shifted from less than a quarter (23%) to fully one-half (50%). Changes in the distribution of faculty members by discipline have changed accordingly.

Zemsky and Massy portrayed these trends as contributing to escalating costs of higher education. They were also the front end of a trend that has been further exacerbated by the rise of new providers in the for-profit and distance education markets. Higher education has been repackaged and commodified into a range of products and services. The large textbook providers control content through multi-platform delivery systems and even go so far as create generic classes and curricula that providers can offer through primarily a student service model. As another example of the self-generating nature of these new higher education professions, several have grown to the size where their associations have moved from member volunteer organisations to professionally staffed associations that offer their own certificates and educational services.
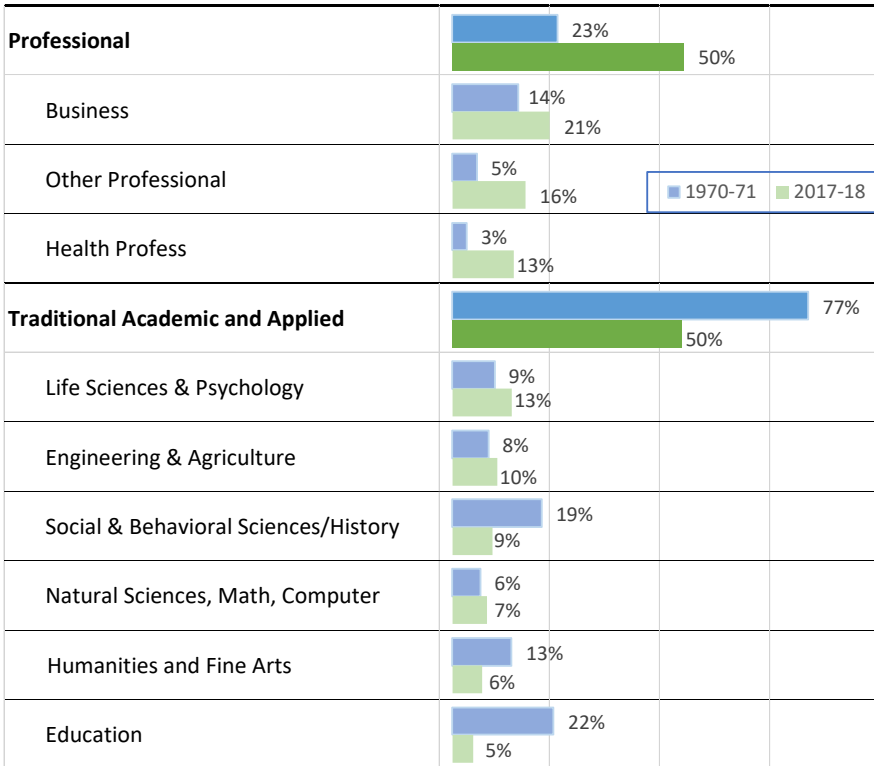
Figure 1. Bachelor's degrees conferred by general field of study, academic years 1970-71 and 2017-18.
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2019 Digest of Education Statistics, Table 322.10

After presenting the case study narratives, we will return to re-considering the role of the academic ratchet and administrative lattice in relation to the experiences and observations presented in the cases, and the ramifications these have for transforming large, complex institutions of higher education.

3 Participant Observer Reflections within Context
The current study employs a participant observer multiple case study approach

to explore the phenomenology of three staff members who have been experiencing the pandemic at a large Midwestern, U.S. public research university. The participant-observer case-study approach, like other qualitative approaches (e.g., ethnography and action research) are particularly appropriate for the study of social and cultural phenomena, such as the experience of a pandemic. The value of this approach derives, as noted by Iacono *et al.*, '… from the observations that, given the human capacity to talk, the object of understanding a phenomenon from the point of view of the actors is largely lost when textual data are quantified' (Iaocono, Brown & Holtham 2009: 39).

The case study approach generally examines phenomena in their natural setting. It is most appropriate when the phenomena cannot be separated from its context, although some schools of thought in the phenomenological tradition suggest this separation is never possible. The author/participant-observers of this article include three higher education staff who generally approach scholarship from a post-positivist perspective, believing in some level of generalisation across contexts, but also believing that the interpretive contexts used in social science or any type of human research, are human constructions that do not represent an objective reality. We also recognise that the level of generalisation possible from a specific setting depends on its similarity to other settings in terms of region (United States, Midwest) organisational type (large, public research university), and staff/clientele (regional and socio-cultural characteristics). However, we also note that one of the points of such analysis is to provide all readers with information that can be interpreted, adapted, and tailored to similar, if not identical settings.

As previously noted, the university within which we work is a large, public midwestern 'flagship' campus within a state-wide university. The campus is located in a relatively rural location, but by virtue of the campuses size and operational diversity, the population density of the city it is the fourth highest in the state, well ahead of the state's major metropolitan areas. The state's largest city, its capital, is located just 80 kilometres north of the campus. The entire university enrols just short of 100,000 students, with the authors' campus being the largest: roughly 45,000 students and 10,000 staff. The campus is very traditional, with the vast majority of undergraduate students (about 33,000 total) attending full-time and either living on campus or with other students (or on their own, or possibly with young families) in nearby off-campus housing. All other campuses of the institution enrol notably higher proportions of older and part-time students, with limited or no campus housing

(that is, 'commuter' campuses). However, many of the executive administrators for the entire University (President and Vice Presidents), and their staff, including the institution's public health, safety, and crisis management core team, work at the traditional, flagship campus.

3.1 Case 1: Professor and Senior Administrator

Having worked at the university for 28 years, I have been affiliated with two different campuses, two different academic departments (Psychology and Education) and have worked within both campus and system administrations. Currently, my work is split, with half being the duties of a full professor in a doctoral program (higher education) on the flagship campus, and half as a senior advisor in the office of the Executive Vice President for University Academic Affairs, a system-level division.

The mid-March 2020 lockdown came in the middle of the Spring semester, during the Spring Break week, when many students were away from campus. Typically, at that time of year, I and many of my colleagues would be shuffling between conferences and travel for research, with some using the break week to visit family. I was supposed to have flown to Singapore for a research group meeting over spring break, but that trip was cancelled a few weeks earlier, due to the spreading COVID-19 virus in East Asia. It was clear that the U.S. was about to be hit hard, as many last-minute conference cancellations occurred during the last two weeks in February and especially the first two week of March. Very abruptly, our busy, travel-filled lives would transition to a lifestyle to which most of us were unaccustomed: staying in one place, our respective homes, with only virtual contact with our colleagues and students. Within my department, the classes we teach (in my case, one doctoral seminar), shifted from mostly in-person to mostly synchronous, online. This was a relatively minor shift for us because we were already used to accommodating remotely located students who would 'attend' class through video conferencing, with most students at the classroom location. However, this was not true for many colleagues, and especially those teaching large undergraduate classes through traditional modes of delivery (in-person lecture, lab, discussion, seminar, etc.).

While we adjusted to the temporary lockdown, the world seemed to be falling apart around us. Having lived through a range of crises in the United States (two major blackouts; civil rights and anti-Vietnam war protests of the

late 60s-early 70s; serial killers on the loose; and 9/11 to name a few), and been close to locations where major weather disasters have occurred (especially tornadoes, given our location), I have always been uplifted by the way people come together during such times to help each other through. Something is different from most of those prior crises. There are still many visible instances of people acting selflessly to help others, but the news is dominated these days by the political divisiveness and hate that has more recently characterised the national discourse. This divisiveness is fuelled by a series of police led homicides of black men in circumstances that reveal long-standing systemic bias. This ignites protest among people of colour and notably more white allies than after similar incidents that have been occurring regularly throughout U.S. history.

Protests ignited locally when a racist hate crime occurred on July 4 (U.S. Independence Day holiday) at our local recreational lake. Demands increased that our university take visible steps to address inequities. Because this happened during the relatively quiet summer when most undergraduates are not on campus, the calls and actions are primarily among university staff and many graduate-level students who remain at the university over the summer. The senior administrators of the university are very sympathetic. They are aware of the systemic inequities in our institutions and are personally committed to addressing them. The Dean of the School of Education was appointed to lead anti-racist initiatives for the university. The faculty members and students in my program are all deeply and personally affected by these incidents and met several times during the summer to consider how we can take meaningful steps, first to ensure that our own program has a suitable climate for our students and then to work with those students to pursue broader change.

The disruption to our teaching caused by the health pandemic seems much easier to manage than the social justice pandemic. Taking action to shift to all online instruction is a much more manageable task than dismantling institutionalised racism. Many of the recent classes and new degree and certificate programs we have developed are either entirely online or include significant online components, taking advantage of the Learning Management System (LMS) we use across all campuses. A few of my colleagues took the occasion to replace synchronous meetings with additional asynchronous learning resources, student discussions, and other learning activities. The university's online class and program development has been extremely active

in recent years. A relatively new Office of Online Education provides support to instructors and programs for expanding our online programs and classes. A Keep Teaching web site (https://keepteaching.iu.edu/) was created to provide a one-stop resource centre that was managed and populated through the collaboration of instructional technology and design experts from our teaching and learning, learning technologies, and online learning offices.

The administrative work I do usually focuses on strategic and tactical matters and less so on operational issues. However, the senior administrator I work with has a portfolio of university-level (system) responsibility that is wide ranging, including public health and safety, the back end of all student systems (registration, financial aid, advising, etc.), state academic relations, executive recruiting, university policy, strategic planning, state and federal compliance reporting, university-wide faculty development, and university-k12 partnerships. In addition, all the chief officers (chancellors) of the five regional campuses report to him. With the crisis at hand, the Executive VP rallied all his units, holding weekly meetings of his 16 direct reports, who together supervise over 200 system-level staff members across all campuses.

Among the most uplifting experiences of this time, which stood in vast contrast to the general news about the global health and social justice pandemic, was the clear devotion to serving students and helping our community through the pandemic that members of the team demonstrated. Area directors were spending incredibly long hours analysing what would need to be done under a variety of planning scenarios. They were as concerned about their staff as about students. The individuals empowered to make decisions that would affect staff and students took those decisions very seriously and conferred with appropriate experts to choose in some instances from among the least damaging among available alternatives. On the other hand, the situation also created opportunities for redesigning traditional practices.

As one example, colleagues in three different divisions coordinated the development of online/virtual campus orientations, since new student orientation is one of the largest and most important activities that occur in the summer. Approaching this as an opportunity to improve the orientation process, student support and online program colleagues went back to basic principles, articulating the essential objectives of orientation and designing online modules, using curricular design and delivery frameworks. Although they recognised that there would be a great disadvantage to not bringing students to campus, they believed that they had significantly improved the

orientation program on most campuses and, perhaps more significantly, discovered that there was a lot of 'busy work' in the old models that did not make good use of students' time together. The general consensus was that we would continue to develop the online orientation modules and otherwise move online permanently aspects of orientation that do not require interaction, reserving the face-to-face time, when again possible, for relationship building. The changes made to new student orientation are but one example of myriad redesign activities that this group of 16 division leaders undertook to prepare for the immediate near-term and uncertain long-term future.

I also had a chance during the disruption to work with the top executive administrators of the university—the three executive vice presidents and their chief assistants—developing an institutional grant proposal. That experience gave me a sense of what these three top executives were dealing with: working day, night and weekends, meeting with every imaginable constituency including more intensive collaboration than usual with city, county, and state public health officials. They had to make hundreds, if not thousands, of very quick decisions with relatively limited and rapidly changing information. The critical importance of coordinating communications during an emergency became quite apparent as layers of administrators released dozens of messages in the early days, adding more to the general confusion. I noticed in meetings with my faculty colleagues, that the confusion and general frustration was often aimed at senior administrators, alleging how much control they had and how they were not performing as well as my faculty colleagues and students thought they could and should. The dissonance was generally aimed toward a faceless entity: the administration. I have been involved in University administration for nearly 40 years and have learned well that administrators are more often the foil for faculty and student discontent than they are the cause. However, I have also noticed that those who know and work with these individuals think they are competent, well-intentioned people. But when there are no good answers, having a foil can be useful in some ways, although painful to witness and experience.

Because this university was in fiscally sound condition prior to the disruption, and because especially the flagship campus is vital to the economy of the small town it occupies, one of the primary objectives of the central administration was to maintain its workforce. A hiring freeze and 5 percent budget cut were invoked. But even if a staff member was unable to do their work due to the changes in operations, they were guaranteed to be paid through

the end of June. After that point, jobs would no longer be guaranteed, but the objective was to keep as many jobs as possible and to redirect individuals who could not work to new work within the organisation.

Enrolment for the Fall 2020 semester would be one of the determinants of the fiscal health of the institution through the crisis. Like most large research universities in the United States, even public institutions, tuition fees from students comprise the single largest source of revenue: just over 50% of the total for our campus, with state appropriation accounting for less than 20% and the remainder coming from research funding, philanthropy and other university revenue operations (e.g., campus housing, intercollegiate athletics, campus event services, etc.). Much of the activity of June and July was devoted to promoting student enrolment. Indeed, the decision to have both in-person and virtual instruction was motivated by the belief that going fully online would result in a significant decline in enrolment, which would then require more extensive budget cuts and require eliminating a significant number of employees. Toward this end, the institution finally decided, by mid-June, to plan for a 'hybrid' fall semester. Having in-person classes for programs for which that was critical (e.g., dance performance, some laboratory disciplines and clinical health programs). In-person attendance would also be available for new students, so we would not lose too many who figured that, if they were going to attend virtually, they might as well stay home and attend a less expensive institution.

In many ways, July was the calm before the storm. With the campuses between semesters, summer session classes winding down, many of the staff who had been working non-stop since mid-March took long needed breaks, although 'getting away' had very limited options. This was also the month during which the decisions made in June were moving into implementtation stages, with staff who were not generally involved in making those decisions on the front lines carrying them out. In July, the COVID-19 virus flared up across the Southern and Western States, bringing into question the plans made in June based on trajectories at the time. As our university staff started to prepare for incoming students, plans were being made and changed daily about safe opening protocols, including mass-testing. As colleges across the country started to bring back athletes in the summer for training, news of COVID-19 breakouts was frequent. By mid-August, many institutions starting resuming classes, again with very mixed outcomes and close coverage by the media of students congregating at large off-campus and even on-campus parties.

At our university, 39,000 students were tested during the extended three-week student move-in period (mid-August) with less than a 1% positivity rate. Despite this, I know many students, faculty and staff were uncomfortable interacting closely with students and their families coming in from all over the state and country. Mask-wearing was generally prevalent, but not universally, since there are factions of people in our country who still believe the pandemic is a hoax, or that masks are a political, not health behaviour. Now, just two weeks into the semester, nearly 20 student residents (mostly fraternity and sorority houses) had to go into quarantine due to positivity rates in mitigation testing over 25%. Students and staff had to sign a contract this semester to follow the pandemic health rules. Penalties for 3 incidences of non-compliance lead to immediate dismissal for both students and staff. Of course, enforcing this includes giving everyone an avenue for reporting witnessed noncompliance behaviour, in other words, students and staff 'turning in' other students and staff.

When talking with students in my program, who are primarily training to be higher education administrators and researchers, I hear the frustration and anxiety they are facing in working the front lines. I know they are not happy with the situation and feel that they do not have a choice. This is no time to be on the job market in higher education, so they just must bear the pain. Our program enrols a relatively large proportion of students of colour (about 40%) and the scholarship of all faculty in the program are shaped by issues of social justice and equity. As we navigate this unique semester and whatever follows, we see before us more vividly than ever the hate, inequity and injustice that is systemically laced within all our institutions, including the university. We see stark examples of both effective and ineffective leadership in the political domain, and we cannot always agree on which is which. We see more than ever the role that higher education can play in dismantling these inequities but realise the work must start within our own institution. We are energised to be part of that change if we and our institution can survive the next few months… or years.

3.2 Case 2: PhD Student

I have been at this institution for 7 years, first completing a master's degree and now finishing my doctorate. I am the first person in my family to seek an advanced degree. I returned to school after working in industry because I

wanted to be an educator. I then fell in love with research and enjoyed a welcoming lab environment with ample resources and generous people. I then found myself torn, unable to decide if I was an educator or researcher first. I still do not have an answer–both passions run deep. I care deeply about this institution and believe in the mission of higher education.

Prior to the pandemic, at the start of my PhD program, the department I was affiliated with was merged with two other departments into a new, single entity. I am a member of the inaugural PhD class. The program merger was not an instance of shared governance, but a decision from 'on high.' It is my understanding that the change was made to reduce overhead and facilitate bringing together a (financially successful) independent school with the much larger (and financially struggling) College of Arts and Sciences.

Even in my relatively short time as a member of this institution, I have seen what seemed to be a slowly rising tide of neoliberalism turn into a tidal wave. The university is a business, now more than ever. I have also noticed that many faculty members seem unconcerned or resigned to the changes (in addition to systematic disenfranchisement through having their power stripped away by administration). It appears to be normalised at this point and accepted. Perhaps I am naïve, but things are only the way they are because we made and allowed them to be this way. That means we can change them.

When the pandemic struck and the university switched to all-online in March, my dissertation ground to a halt. As an experimental psychologist that uses psychophysiological measures, there was absolutely no way I could or would collect data. Ennui set in, and I considered whether I should just walk away and accept that it is time to move on. If I stayed and waited for the lab to open back up (a wholly impossible thing to predict at the time), I could linger well past my funding. Neither option felt ideal. Then it struck me: this is my personal Kobayashi Maru! When faced with no-win scenario, change the scenario. Thus, with an amenable committee, I re-proposed a modified version of my dissertation using what data I had already collected, and I was unmoored and back to work.

Aside from my dissertation, teaching was interrupted for my fellow graduate workers when the pandemic struck. I was on a fellowship and not in the classroom at the time. However, I learned from my peers about what they were forced to cope with: suddenly redesigning a course in the middle of the semester. Again, many of the courses involve students doing hands-on work with specialised equipment. Others are more traditional courses. While

balancing all their work as fulltime students themselves, my peers needed to suddenly redesign their courses without any additional resources or compensation.

Then, moving through the summer, we had no idea what our teaching experience would be in the Fall. I knew I would be back to teaching but had no idea of the modality. There was considerable talk of face-to-face, online-only, and a hazily defined 'hybrid' model. There was disorder across the map, with conflicting information coming from all levels of administration and faculty members. It was clear that the decision to reopen to some amount of face-to-face instruction in the Fall has already been made before there was a plan to do it safely.

Myself and my peers found ourselves completely excluded from this process, even in our own department. We received extremely limited communication, and what correspondence we did have with our administration was that we should be grateful we had jobs. (We asked for clarity on this point because it seemed like a veiled threat. Administration doubled down on their remark.) In all, we received more obfuscation and diversion in response to our requests for information and to have a representative present at meetings. We learned through channels outside our department that the administrators we were talking to were specifically empowered to make the decisions we were asking of them, but they shirked all responsibility, hiding behind the labyrinthine structure and perhaps hoping we didn't know better.

This brings into focus my primary point: the sharp contrast between faculty members and administration's handling of the pandemic and how it encapsulates changes occurring in higher education. It is my personal experience that faculty members have banded together, determined to empower and protect graduate workers and students to the best of their ability. Faculty members have been attentive and sympathetic to how the pandemic has impacted our lives, both as people and as scholars. Even the faculty members that grouse at graduate workers' organizing during the pandemic are busy working hard to try and solve an unsolvable puzzle of how to handle the new not-normal: one of the primary draws for my department is a hands-on learning experience with technology, which presents unique challenge.

Administration, however, holds almost all the power and seems largely unconcerned about the wellbeing of graduate workers, both before and especially during the pandemic. I do not believe there is a nefarious plot afoot, but it is my opinion that graduate workers are treated more like low-level

employees in a business than educators and scholars. Our labour is exploited and taken for granted. Our pay is based on the lowest possible number to populate the positions, and not a liveable wage. The institution's own calculator for yearly cost-of-living as a graduate student shows that cost to be some 40% greater than our pay.

And much like employees at the bottom of any hierarchy; when the pandemic struck, we were treated like 'essential workers': expected to shoulder a disproportionate amount of danger in exchange for sub-living-wage pay. The university's plan to permit an amount of in-person teaching was structured in such a way that graduate workers were far more likely to be subjected to in-person instruction while also wholly unable to decline because funding is a privilege and not a right. Again, no one person is sitting in a darkened room, wringing their hands, and laughing maniacally about how they have pulled one over on the graduate workers. But like in any large, decentralised business, no one is responsible for seeing the big picture ramifications of the choices they make. When staring at a spreadsheet; graduate workers are cheap, plentiful, and readily replicable. We have the least political power and the least ability to stand up to decisions coming down from administration.

The point, again, is that higher education's response to the pandemic is only unmasking the march toward university-as-a-business mentality and a shirking of responsibility for choices being made while at the same time making sweeping choices that impact the lives and wellbeing of many people. There is a lack of accountability and a lack of humanity, just as there is with private industry. However, private industry has far better pay, upward and horizontal mobility, and far fewer barriers to entry. I personally gave up a career where I was already making income comparable to any professor in my department (and was on pace for making far more) because I believed in the mission of higher education. Money is not everything, after all.

3.3 Case 3: Professional Staff – Academic Advisor

I attended this university as an undergraduate and then graduate student from 2008 to 2014. After working in industry for close to two years, I returned to the university and have worked as a full-time academic advisor for almost 3 years, now. I advise for three major programs within the College of Arts and Sciences (hereinafter, College) within the university. I received both my bachelor's and Master's degrees from the department for which I advise. It is

the same department as the Case 2 author, but I received my degrees before the forced merger. I approach this case from my perspective as an academic advisor in the College. However, I acknowledge I cannot separate my past from my present perception of reality, so undoubtedly my years as a student inform my perceptions in ways that I cannot consciously distinguish. At the time of this writing, while I work full-time, I am two weeks into taking a class as a student (outside the department for which I advise) that has a lecture, discussion, and lab component. I feel fortunate that I was given the opportunity to attend all these class components online. Some students in the class have elected to attend the discussion in-person.

Before the disruption, all academic advising in the College was in-person. We had in place an appointment scheduling system accessible online through which students could schedule appointments. Advisors created bookable appointment slots on their end of the system. These slots must be pre-determined as 'in-person,' 'telephone,' or 'online.' Advisors can only choose one option, so all advisor appointments were 'in-person.' There were exceptions, though. Students studying abroad, for example, could email the advisor to let them know to expect a phone call, which they then had to make during our local time working hours. It was generally acknowledged that in-person advising was preferable to remote, since body language and tone are more easily conveyed. We will often have personal and potentially difficult conversations with students; the in-person setting is preferable for everyone involved in those conversations. Not only is in-person sometimes more comforting for students, but it is also good for advisors so that we can assess more accurately if a particular student is in distress or otherwise in need of more than just academic help. I actively discouraged phone appointments and would request that students make an appointment with another advisor in the department if they wanted or needed a phone appointment.

Students in my department are not assigned an academic advisor. There are 6 advisors for the department, and students can schedule with any of us at their convenience. Thus, we do not have a traditional caseload. However, given the number of students in the department, the per advisor ratio is about a 333:1. There was a period of time a year before the disruption where there were only four advisors, and thus the ratio was 500:1. Needless to say, it was a very stressful time for the four of us. With either ratio, advisors in my department can easily get a sense of the general mood of the students we work with. We meet with between 7 and 14 students every day, except for the

occasional slow week during the Fall or Spring semester, and during the Summer.

There is no clear promotional structure for academic advisors in the College, though other units on campus do have promotional structures for academic advisors. In the College, though, it is generally accepted that academic advisors will never be promoted within the unit. We are usually eligible for as much as a 3% raise each fiscal year. Because of when I was hired, and now the pandemic, when a salary freeze was implemented, I have only seen this raise once. I find it difficult at this early and low salary point in my career to work in an environment where there is no monetary incentive to go above and beyond. It feels like I am expected to enjoy the prospects of working as an entry-level academic advisor and if I want to 'move up,' I would need to take a different position in another unit.

During the summer, advisors are required to advise students during new student orientation. Traditionally this has been done in the main library on campus. Incoming students from the state as well as many from around the country are required to come to campus for a two-day orientation, then return to wherever they call home, and then come back to campus again to start the Fall semester. International students come two weeks before classes start for their orientation. Unless a student has an impairment that requires the presence of someone else, these orientation advising meetings are just between the student and an advisor. Parents or guardians have an optional orientation during their dependent's orientation, so they can be physically on campus with the student. In general, I (and most advisors) prefer to only have the student present during a meeting, as meetings can be awkward with other family members present and it can be cumbersome to explain things to two different people at once.

With that pre-disruption context, I have noticed a lot of pandemic-related changes affecting me, my colleagues, and the students I work with. The students who attend this campus are traditional-age, predominantly 18-22 years old. Most undergraduates currently at the university were born after the turn of the millennium. They are members of 'Generation Z' (Gen Z). Before the pandemic, advisors were being educated on the characteristics and behaviours of Gen Z students, and the lens through which they view the world so we could advise them more productively. Defining a generation of students is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is worth noting that Gen Z students and their parents are significantly different from Millennials (the Case 2 and 3 authors),

Generation X, and Baby Boomers (Case 1 author). Most importantly, Gen Z are 'digital natives,' who never knew a time without the Internet and very high speeds of information transfer, pervasive access (with some notable inequities), the ability for instantaneous, live online, worldwide interactions through pervasive social media.

When the lockdown began in mid-March, I started to work from home. I remain working from home and intend to work from home until there is a vaccine and things are safe enough, in my opinion, to return to campus. I benefit from a sense of job security, since our administrators know how non-functional the department would be with fewer than six advisors. Students need professional academic advising more than ever. I have overwhelmingly enjoyed working from home, though I frequently remember thinking that advising was more effective in person. But is it?

Students now schedule their 'in-person' appointments and, depending on the advisor, elect to meet through videoconferencing, telephone, or email. I like the flexibility this gives students. I have found more students show up for their appointments because they do not have to make a special trip and walk across campus or drive to campus just to meet with me. I enjoy meeting through videoconferencing over telephone, and would rather not take email appointments, though I have them as an option for students who feel uncomfortable with or do not have access to other available options. The disruption has changed the way I conduct appointments slightly, but I have adjusted quickly, and think this new method I have developed gives more transparency and ultimately leads to more understanding with the student.

Remote working has had an overwhelming positive effect on my mental health. Being physically on campus means experiencing the general anxiety level of all the people around you. Gen Z is known to have more reported mental health issues than any previous generation. While I take my responsibility seriously to help students with whatever is affecting them, I am not a trained mental health professional. Advisors experience an emotional and mental-health toll from doing what they do. Before the pandemic, if I was dealing with other issues in my life, I'd either need to take a 'mental health day' off from work, or come to work and work through my personal pain while also being confronted with students' issues. It can be incredibly taxing for someone not trained in counselling. Now that I am not physically around stressed-out students, staff, and/or faculty all day, I can much more easily manage my own mental health. Of course, the pandemic brings other

challenges to maintaining one's mental well-being, but that, too, seems more manageable when I am in the comfort of my own home.

I worry about students who do not live in comfortable or safe environments. I also worry about the growing digital divide. Typically, students with lower socioeconomic status will not pay to live in campus housing, and so will be taking classes from home. They may live in an area or house that does not have reliable Internet access, and possibly do not own a computer. There is undoubtedly the potential for underserved students (in the United States, primarily low-income and black, Hispanic, or indigenous peoples) to face many barriers to education. There is relatively little I as an individual can do to help these students but refer them to other relevant University services. I will always follow-up with a student to see if they have followed through on such referrals, though I do not always hear back.

This summer, orientation was all online. I think the advising portion of orientation benefited massively from being online. It forced us to think critically about what should happen in that meeting, and thus improved the overall structure of the meeting. Meetings were lengthened, and so ultimately much more demand was put on advisors' time. However, I noticed that I was not nearly as exhausted at the end of the day as I had been doing in-person orientation appointments.

One undesirable effect of online meetings was not being able to bar parents or guardians from the meetings (students were typically videoconferencing from their parents' house). In many cases, when parents were present in my appointments, they would start talking for the student and pass judgement on the student for their course elections. They would also get frustrated when they could not follow along at every step (the student was the one using the computer to explore, plan, and sign up for classes). I do not blame the parents, though. Usually when parents want to be present, it is because they are paying for their child's education. Now, not only are they paying the same price (or more), but they are doing so for what many believe is an inferior educational experience, with university deadlines constantly shifting as the university made many last-minute decisions. Parents are concerned and worried that their children will not 'get what they signed up for.' And they are right, their children will not get a traditional college education, at least not this semester.

The students I interact with seem to be much more compassionate, understanding, and patient than before the pandemic. The pandemic and

sudden change to education in the Spring semester apparently forced many of them to mature quickly. In mid-March I received an overwhelming amount of email that I (and other advisors) were not able to keep up with in as timely a fashion as we wished, the amount of emails started to ease as summer approached. Now, students are kind and less demanding in their emails. (I do not blame students for being demanding in email, they are still figuring things out.) They acknowledge they are emailing a real person who, like them is working from home during a common experience of crisis and not reacting to the staff member sitting behind a desk in a university office. I receive many more thank you emails. Students acknowledge when they are feeling overwhelmed or stressed, and thus acknowledge that their emergency is their own responsibility even when exacerbated by their emotional state. I've witnessed an immense growth in emotional maturity, which is wonderful, but sad since it came from such an unfortunate circumstance and may even be due to a better understanding of just how bad things can be or maybe they've been personally affected by COVID-19 or are engaged in soul-searching about racism.

Throughout this crisis, I have been underwhelmed and disappointed by the university's communication with students, staff, and faculty. A lot of emails were sent with very little tangible information. There are many policy questions for which I do not have a clear answer to provide students. When important decisions are made at the top, they trickle down and enormously affect advisors' jobs, since we are one of the main student-facing services of the university. Policies concerning grading and class structure were made without informing advisors. Some policies were changed so many times that it was impossible to keep track. There was enough room for interpretation of university policy statements, that implementation at the department level varied considerably. This put students in confusing situations that even advisors could not figure out. Advisors work closely with the Director of Undergraduate Studies in my department. On several occasions, he had to apologise because he had announced a policy and then had to amend what he said. He claimed the university had inconsistent and confusing messaging. Essentially, as the Fall 2020 semester was about to begin, we did not have a good idea of what was going on.

To be clear, and to echo Case 2, I do not think the administration's intentions are bad. I understand they have and continue to work hard to find solutions within a no-win scenario. However, as the adage goes: 'The road to

hell is paved with good intentions'. Just after it was announced that the Fall 2020 semester would include in-person learning opportunities, the administration said students should be brave to go back to school, even comparing it to war and a defining moment of the students' generation. I think it was wholly inappropriate to ask students to be soldiers, willing to sacrifice themselves for their education. This led students to question the intentions of the university and was not a great way to start the implementation of an in-person fall semester.

As a more specific example of good intentions not playing out, the university made it clear it wanted to provide as many hybrids and in-person opportunities as possible, especially for incoming students. What ended up happening was the opposite. Most of the students I advised for new student orientation were enrolled in entirely online courses. We would often have a conversation at the end of the appointment where I validated their disappointment and frustration. I explained to them that most of the courses that incoming students take are large and that it was impossible to offer them in a safe way. The university promised them hybrid options, but that became an unfulfillable promise. As a result, a lot of students now feel as though they were victims of a 'bait and switch' operation.

Ultimately, I do not think 'new normal' is a good phrase for the situation in which we currently find ourselves. This was apparent to me when meeting with incoming students (and their parents) during orientation: referring to 'normal' only creates expectations that a new normal will be close to the old normal. Many parents and their new-to-college students wanted to take as many in-person classes as possible to 'maintain a sense of normalcy.' In contrast, most returning students wanted mostly online classes. This is probably an indication of the rocky transition from in-person to online learning in the K-12 system, whereas many university students had been previously exposed to our online classes during the lockdown and could informatively assess whether the difference in quality was worth risking their lives. Gen Z is the most diverse generation to date. Because of their diversity, and considering the social justice component of the current pandemic, a notable number, if not a large majority of these students, have been energised by the social justice and equity dimensions of the current situation. I agree with that sentiment and think that we should use this disruption to completely dismantle and rebuild the higher educational system, so we do not return to a normal but rather create something better.

4 Conclusion and Recommendations for a Different than Normal Future

This year marks our institutions bicentennial (200th year) anniversary. It was established in 1820 as a state seminary. Became an official university in 1838 and continued to evolve and expand its reach across the state to become the state's largest higher education institution. Our history is both unique but also characteristic of how higher education in the United States has evolved since that time.

The cases presented in this study reveal a disjuncture in the experience at this institution between the people who make the decisions and those charged with carrying them out. This is not a surprise finding. In the remainder of this chapter, we put forth a set of conclusions drawn from our differences.

4.1 Large IHEs can Change Processes and Systems Fairly Rapidly

Like most large, organisationally complex public universities, our institution has developed over time a very significant administrative infrastructure that combines the academic and administrative operations necessary to run an institution that operates at the scale of a modestly sized U.S. city. That infrastructure seems to have served the institution well, even though it carries the burden of sustaining employment among a very large and diversified workforce and operating very complex management systems required given the diverse nature of U.S. higher education funding sources and pricing structures.

Stories have emerged across the country of instances where the changes did not produce highly effective results. Polls of students taken during the pandemic reveals that many students did not get the quality of education they experienced before the pandemic. However, when given a choice of resuming in-person instruction for Fall 2020 or continuing with online instruction until it is safer to congregate, those who went through the experience of our online instruction were much more inclined to stay online for the time being. Our cases include instances of three people continuing their work with relatively little disruption and, in the one case where dissertation studies were at first severely knocked off course, a correction was made to resume progress. We have each mentioned and have heard many colleagues indicate that they expect that this situation will permanently impact where they do their work from, with all of us expecting to employ videoconferencing more

as a routine way to meet with people without have to take the time to walk across campus. We were already doing this at times for our teaching and administrative work and, while we long for those random encounters in hallways and on campus, we have experienced how much more time we can devote to our important work if we reduce the amount of time moving between meetings. We are looking forward to resuming state, national and world travel, more so for the sake of travel and less so for the purposes of conducting business: that we can do from anywhere.

The professionalisation of higher education behind the administrative lattice may well have contributed to cost escalation, but it has provided U.S. colleges and universities, with a supporting infrastructure that can work rapidly to respond to challenging circumstances. This institution's ability to maintain operations during the pandemic has been successful to this point, although at the price of contributing to the angst and uncertainty for students and front-line colleagues. While we do not know what the months ahead hold in store: so far, we are operating without having to furlough staff or consider other significant changes in operations.

4.2 Rapid Change Comes at a High Cost

Rapid change within a constantly evolving multi-faceted pandemic comes with some significant costs. It is seemingly impossible to be transparent about decision making when the volume is so high and so widely distributed. On the plus side, the decentralisation of decision making made it possible to adapt decisions to local needs. But the downside is that the individuals whose lives were most affected by those decisions do not feel they were adequately consulted. The diffusion of responsibility that Zemsky and Massy described as the consequent of the administrative lattice and academic ratchet is clearly evident in the case narratives.

4.3 Shared Governance Needs an Overhaul

Higher education includes more shared governance than many other types of institutions, but that shared governance has its limits both in terms of ability to respond to fast-changing circumstances, and perhaps more importantly, being based on somewhat outmoded assumptions regarding the composition of the higher education workforce and the operation of higher education institutions.

Faculty senates or councils are the prototype of shared governance. In the last year, the faculty senate at this institution extended the vote, albeit with proportional representation, to non-tenure track faculty. While that expanded participation in shared governance from roughly 1500 to 2000 campus staff, that still represents a small portion of the near 10,000 total campus staff. Other groups are represented through staff council and some collective bargaining units. Students participate in shared governance through their student governance system, which interfaces with the faculty governance system. However, these rather archaic structures, while modernised through virtual meetings, may not be the most effective way, and they are not the only way faculty and staff participate in decision making within the institution. Indeed, the very decentralised nature of decision making allows many students and staff to participate if they seek out those opportunities.

Our sense is that we need to enhance, reshape, or replace these antiquated forms of governance and communication with new ways to collect, analyse, share, and debate information among the full array people that participate in the education, research, scholarship and creative activity in which we collaboratively engage.

4.4 Systemic Transformation is More Challenging and Important

The social justice dimension of the current pandemic underscores the need for higher education institutions to make substantial changes in the ways they operate if they wish to contribute to dismantling systemic injustice and inequity. There is no lack of consensus: our individual and collective experience at this institution and the others in which we have been students and staff, is that a substantial majority of students and staff recognise the problem and would like to see existing opportunity and attainment gaps by race, gender orientation, and geographic origin reduced and eventually ameliorated. But we also recognise that we are complicit in preserving these inequities due to the depth of their systematisation in our culture and our institutions.

The pandemic has demonstrated that practical change is possible and relatively manageable. Addressing entrenched institutional racism and other social inequities is far more important and difficult. The entrenched administrative and academic systems that have evolved over two centuries carry the full weight of the social injustices and inequities on which they are built. Our

university has a land acknowledgement statement, maintained by a First Nations Educational & Cultural Center, that acknowledges and honours the indigenous communities native to the region on whose ancestral homelands and resources the university was built. Like many institutions with a relatively (by U.S. standards) long history, some of our buildings were named after individuals who explicitly promoted racism and bigotry. We are in the process of reviewing and as deemed appropriate, changing those names (and several such changes have already been made). These small steps signal good intentions and the beginnings of needed reforms, but we understand that the depth and pervasiveness of those inequities will require sustained attention and action and may still take generations to unravel.

4.5 Advances in Technology can Promote or Inhibit Systemic Transformation

Rapid advances in communications and analytical technologies have enabled us to develop more accessible personalised resources for our students. For example, learning analytics have been used to identify aspects of the curriculum that have large success gaps by race and ethnicity. Once identifies, we can then devise and assess pedagogical and curricular reform strategies to support the success of diverse students. We are now starting to see the use of artificial intelligence in applications that enable students to better manage their studies, including a new tool that that rakes data from the institution's learning management system to provide students with a cross-curricular assignment and time management tool.

Students entering in recent years are, on average, notably more digitally literate than their predecessors and, in many cases, instructors. However, that also means that the divide between those with higher and lower levels of access, opportunity and skill is larger than ever. While today's technologies are far more accessible than ever, the dependency on them is higher and so those without access or skills are at a greater disadvantage. We need to be very careful when leveraging technologies to ensure that we do so in ways that reduce and does not contribute to the 'digital divide.'

4.6 Expertise is our Core Asset

The intellectual and humanitarian assets of our organisation are its most val-

uable commodities. Traditionally, this expertise has resided within the academic programs and departments. Now it is more diffusely organised throughout both the academic and administrative bureaucracies we have cultivated over many years. One of the disruptive forces from well before the pandemic, was the translation of university knowledge into products and services that help advance healthcare, education, public services, private enterprise, and all forms of scientific and scholarly endeavour. Indeed, these efforts are part of the commodification of higher education, but they also provide tangible positive outcomes that garner public support.

Universities have a long history of sporadic use of academic expertise to help manage and further develop the institution. The use of internal expertise tends to take three forms: academics with talent for administrative duties taking leadership posts, traditional shared governance, and expertise that can be tapped into for specific, episodic needs. For example, the first author of this article assembled a group of internal experts from computer science, operations research, learning sciences, and public policy over the summer to address the issue of using artificial intelligence to reduce the digital divide. When discussing the cases among authors, each of the co-authors referred to research they or another student or staff member had conducted relevant to our discussions.

It is hard to imagine an intellectual and problem-solving resource stronger and more concentrated than the full array of academic and administrative expertise housed within a modern university. The administrative lattice and academic ratchet have contributed substantially the to the development of that expertise but have also contributed to the diffusion of responsibility characteristic of large, decentralised and highly specialised organisations. If we can figure out how to better harness our own assets and deploy them for the type of transformative changes needed to address the pressing problems of social injustice and inequity. To paraphrase the ancient proverb, 'University, educate thyself!'

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Te[a]chnolog[able]y: A Move/me[a]nt to Counter the Neoliberal Global Pandemic

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Abstract
COVID-19 prompted most educators across the globe to actively deploy technology during confinement to ensure the continuity of teaching in a time period marked by the world-wide pandemic of neoliberal globalisation and active anti-systemic decolonial movements both within the North and South. Neoliberal globalisation is a multi-centuric, world-wide, global governance system designed and executed by a few for a few in pursuit of economic wealth and power. Neoliberalism champions capitalism and regards nations as borderless business units and generates related societal ills (i.e. warfare, poverty, land dispossession) rooted in the coloniality of power. Technology and technological pursuits have fuelled the rise and expansion of neoliberal globalisation, with the more recent 'developments' in microelectronics and information and communication technology (ICT). This world-wide system of global governance deploys education as a tool to serve its global agenda by contouring and controlling educational reforms and policies; promoting Education for All (EFA) for a 'better' neoliberal world through initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); imbibing the values of global competition; mandating life-long learning for the knowledge economy and the deployment of technology. This paper argues that the readily available use of technology is not serendipitous but rather linked to the wider neoliberal global agenda advocating technological use in education to prepare learners to function within the neoliberal capitalist system. I propose that we te[a]chnolog[able]ly (*teach knowledgeably*) about our current historical moment beyond the lens/knowledge rooted in/for the knowledge economy, given that there are no neoliberal global solutions for neoliberal global problems.

Keywords: neoliberal globalisation, coloniality and decoloniality, international educational reforms, knowledge, [higher] education

1 Introduction

The COVID-19 epidemic has entered an historical moment marked by the world-wide pandemic of neoliberal globalization, alongside active anti-systemic decolonial movements and processes both within the North and South contexts (de Sousa Santos 2008; Bello 2019; Sethi 2011). Within formal educational spaces, prolonged societal confinement during COVID-19 [has] activated institutions world-wide to deploy technology, either voluntarily or involuntarily, to anchor and attend to the timely completion of pending teaching, assessments, and semester. This convenient availability of remote online technology is not a serendipitous savior but rather, accurately reflects the current neoliberal reforms of the 1990s, emphasising educational expansion, decentralisation, privatisation, and the deployment of technology (Carnoy 2012). While technology has been availed in most higher education spaces, perhaps emergent engagements have been delimited to its practical, operational, and pedagogical applications more so than its worldwide consequences. The well-intended deployment of technology prompted by COVID-19, has now accelerated and escalated the trajectory of technological use in higher education possibly without concurrent critical consideration of the neoliberal global project design (Mignolo 2000). This chapter discusses the ways in which the deployment of technology at the micro-level spaces within education actively breeds and feeds neoliberal globalisation. It argues for critical understanding of neoliberal globalisation, acknowledging its propensity for world-wide structural violence, and the illusion of democratic education (formal, informal, and non-formal) for a fair and unequal society. The 'knowledge' neoliberalism espouses across the globe is critically countered.

A baseline analysis of globalisation can be characterised as the growing interdependence of societies across the world increasingly sharing similar consumer goods, mode of economics, political influences, and culture. It is characterised by capital, trade, transactions, investments, multi-national corporations, technological advancement, dissemination of knowledge, and the movement of people all within a global context that slots and categorises countries as 'developed' (former colonial countries), 'developing' (Brazil, Russia,

India, China, and South Africa), and 'underdeveloped' (African continent, small islands, parts of Asia), on the basis of their gross domestic product (GDP) (Arrighi 2005; Scholte 2005). Globalisation is a worldwide hegemonic politico-economic system of governance, rooted in coloniality, created by a few élite, for a few élite, in pursuit of global economic power, wealth, and profit (Escobar 2004; Mignolo 2000). While globalisation has been praised for many positive outcomes within a short period of time such as increased life expectancy, GDP, and a decrease in population growth and poverty rates (Bhagwati 2004), this analysis fails to acknowledge the interrelated juxtaposed societal ills of war, inter-state conflicts, poverty, unemployment, pollution, food scarcity, land dispossession, human trafficking, genocide, and the inequality they generate (Escobar 2004; Kapoor & Jordan 2019; McMichael 2017). More recent data indicates that 82% of the money generated on a global level in 2017 went to the richest 1% (BBC 2018). At present, the world's eight richest individuals possess wealth equivalent to half of the world's poorest individuals (Oxfam 2018). These realities indicate a dysfunctional, failing global economic system that is abyssing the economic gap worldwide. The underlying purpose of this paper is to pause and take cognisance of our current historical moment marked by non/evident societal ills, and to deliberate the politics, policy, planning, praxis, and pedagogy of the deployment of technology within the space of education.

This chapter is not written specifically for the North/'developed'/'west or the South/'developing'/'rest', but rather for all, given the omnipresence of neoliberal globalisation, epistemic imperialism, coloniality of power, and the trickle-down effects of neoliberal globalisation (Escobar 2004; Quijano 2000). Within the context of this paper, the terms 'globalisation' and 'neoliberalism' are used interchangeably, given that neoliberalism is globalisation's latest brand. The term 'technology' envelopes all modes and modalities of hard and soft applications, information and communications technology (ICT), soft-ware, telecommunications, computers, and any other machinery which advances the global market for world-wide effectiveness and competition. Within the space of education (formal, informal, and non-formal), technology refers to the hard/soft pedagogical moves and modes of educational software(s), application(s), e-books, digital curriculums, tablets, online remote teaching, and MOOCs (massive open online courses), for example, that prepare learners for competitive economic global growth (Carnoy 2014). It is understood and acknowledged that the praxis of technology varies from country to country,

and context to context. I acknowledge my own surface level deployment of technology as necessitated by my profession and the reluctant complicity of this with my axiological positionality.

Given that 'another world[s] is possible' (McNally 2008) with 'Other[s]' knowledge[s] (de Santos Sousa 2008), I am proposing that we te[a]chnolog[able]y (pronounced *teach knowledgeably*) about the current neoliberal world system to prepare learners to dismantle it and activate contextually-based alternatives. This is a term I have coined to unveil the neoliberal global project within all educational (formal, informal and non-formal) spaces inclusive of schooling, media, industry and society as a whole, to counter and dismantle neoliberal globalisation, capitalism, global competition, and 'over-development'. To te[a]chnolog[able]y is a praxiological move/ment that moves beyond the knowledge of the 'knowledge-economy' to reinstate democracy and human agency, given that economics presently governs societies as opposed to societies governing their respective economies (Polanyi 1944). Through a socio-historical vantage point, this paper contours the origins of neoliberal globalisation and the underpinning 'western-like development' agenda (Peet & Hartwick 2015), followed by an examination of the re/colonising role of education in sustaining neoliberalism/ globalisation. This paper then discusses te[a]chnolog[able]y as a move/me[a]nt to counter the knowledge-hegemony of neoliberal globalisation that is observed within societal/educational spaces (i.e. schools, media, workplace). I argue that we should not let technology-based remote learning alienate us *from* learning, irrespective of COVID-19, but rather we should te[a]chnolog[able]y to galvanise teaching/learning.

2 Neoliberal Globalisation, 'Development', and the Role of Technology

Neoliberal globalisation is a world-wide economic, political and socio-cultural system of global governance designed and executed by a few for a few. It regards nations as borderless 'business units' as evidenced by the establishment of multinational corporations (MNCs) in multiple countries, and mandates no interference from national governments in its endless pursuit of production, accumulation, and profit (Held & McGrew 2007). It is disconnected from social realities and values the capitalist logic of commercialism, individualism and fiscal achievement. A neoliberalist

perspective can be further understood by Fukuyama's (1992) assertion of 'the end of history' at the end of the Cold War, in which he proclaimed the universalisation of western liberal democracy and neoliberal globalisation as the final human regime with no existing alternative[s] to capitalism. Neoliberalists believe that 'those states that fail to make this [economic, political, and cultural] adaptation will fall behind and stagnate, eroding the opportunities of their people' (Peet & Hartwick 2015: 189).

Neoliberal globalisation is both ahistorical and distorted. It argues that colonialism and neocolonialism are obsolete and meritocracy rules in an economically interdependent world governed by MNCs (Burgis 2015). It is a system that '… confuse[s] the things of logic with the logic of things' (Bourdieu 1998: np). What is key to understanding neoliberal globalisation is that the economic, political, and socio-cultural decisions that govern the billions of us on the globe are designed, created, and decided largely by corporate élites who comprise 1% of the world's population (Burgis 2015; McMichael 2017). Deglobalists such as Mignolo (2000: 124), argue that neoliberalism is nothing more than 'a new civilising project driven by the market and transnational corporations'.

Neoliberal globalisation's principles, policies, and structures predate to the 15th century with the Puritan movement which observed the expansion of Europe's mercantile trade, colonialism, and empire building across Africa, Americas, Asia, and Oceania (Amin 2007; Mignolo 2000). This moment in history unleashed unprecedented physical, structural, and onto-epistemic violence in its annexation and exploitation of both material and human resources. After 'in-dependence', the former colonial countries developed the three global international financial institutions (IFIs) in 1944, namely, the World Bank (WB), originally called the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), referred to as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) since 1995. Instituting the IFIs provided 'former' colonial countries (re)access to colonised countries to sustain their multi-centuric politico-economic control of the global market through the classical liberalist ideologies of private enterprise, market supremacy, and free trade (Peet & Hartwick 2015). Colonised countries were pressed to keep their national borders open for export and take high-rate long-term loans from the IFIs to 'develop' and accelerate modern industrial growth.

The 1991 neoliberal economic reforms of the Washington Consensus

emerged due to the South's inability to repay the high interest rate loans (Peet &Hartwick 2015). Neoliberalists then professed that the 'free market logic' emphasising export-based economies, increased foreign trade, investment, and deregulated government control, would 'develop' local economies, eliminate the accrued debt, and reduce poverty levels (Amin 2007; Arrighi 2005). In reality, the debt has exacerbated resulting in reduced government expenditures and investment in education and other key social services (Amin 2007; Peet & Hartwick 2015). Not only are the IFIs continuing to loot colonised countries, they have forced them to lower their standard of living to ensure repayment. From a Marxists/Neo-Marxists lens, one can see the ways in which geopolitics and the history of colonisation have shaped current global economic relations, in which the accumulation and reproduction of wealth observed in the North has come at the expense of those in the South (Amin 2007; Arrighi 2005; Kapoor & Jordan 2019).

Technology has instrumentally foregrounded globalisation's emergence throughout its three 'development' phases (industrial, technological, and electrical) (Arrighi 2005; Scholte 2005). What demarcates globalisation from previous world economies, is the accelerated pace in which global markets were captured due to technological advances in transportation and industry. The nineteenth century observed 'developments' of modern technologies, information and communication technologies (ICT), computers, and telecommunications. More recent advances and economic expenditures centre around the development of artificial intelligence, robotics, and genetic engineering, or what is referred to as the Fourth and Fifth Industrial Revolution. The active pursuit of microelectronics and ICT has revolutionised digital communication (i.e. Internet, mobile phones). This, in turn, has radically altered the global flow of capital goods and services. Multinational corporations (MNCs) now conduct their work digitally in real time anywhere across the globe without necessarily needing to be in close proximity of their targeted markets. They continue to own and control a large percent of the material resources, and production of goods and services in one or more countries other than their home country (Burgis 2015). Despite generating annual profits that exceed billions of US dollars, MNCs continue to set up their companies, plants, and/or factories where cheapest, typically near the vulnerable (Statista 2020; see also Amin 2007; Kapoor & Jordan 2019). Technology has, and is, accelerating and intensifying MNCs' (the 1% of billionaires) traction on the globe.

In addition to annexing politico-economic global control, MNCs monopolise access to cultures across the globe (North and South) by 'manufacturing consent' in the space of public pedagogy through the digital technologies of the internet and media (Giroux 2005). Herman and Chomsky (1988) explain the ways in which corporate media(s) 'manufactures [public] consent' by creating the necessary illusions through propaganda to detract, distort, and distract the public from reality and accepting certain events and practices as absolutely essential with a view to prevent actual democracy. However, technology has provided a steady stream of access to information about the world in real time which might have remained unknown. While digital access to the world's destruction, disparity, and inequality has provided a platform for mass communication and a public pedagogical space for participatory change, it has been criticised for facilitating 'armchair activism', in which dissent can be expressed in a single click or tweet instead of substantive action to achieve actual change.

3 Technology in Education: Accidental or Occidental?

Just as technology foregrounded globalisation's emergence, so did education. During the colonial period, education, educational policies, and schooling served as an onto-epistemic deculturisation project of imbibing the coloniser's 'knowledge' and culture onto the colonised (Abdi 2006; Altbach & Kelly 1978; Nyerere 1968). Underlying this mass socio-cultural engineering was the coloniser's need to permanently secure access to the colonised's resources (human and material). Education was delimited to the four Rs of reading, writing, arithmetic and religion, as opposed to academic subjects such as science and economics to prevent the emergence of a qualified 'local' ruling class. The residual effects of this remain today as many nations, North (i.e. 'New World') and South, remain in dependence on foreign knowledge, policy, and governance due to the inherited colonial system of education and related cognitive imperialism.

An additional factor explaining the continued foreign 'dependence' centres around the World Bank's active role in educational planning and 'development'. As contoured in the previous section, colonised countries were pressed to take high interest rate loans from the IFIs to 'develop' and accelerate modern industrial growth. It was argued that heavy investment in the expansion of education would produce the required human capital necessary for national

reconstruction and modern 'development'. Today, the World Bank remains 'the leading global investor in education' (Spring 2009: 29) and believes 'education is central to development…and reducing poverty…for sustained western-like economic growth' (Spring 2009: 30). The World Bank's education policy seeks to consolidate its own role at the heart of the world economy with reduced government involvement to depict its view of the ideal world-wide economy. Given the accrued debt, nations are left with no alternative other than to adhere and adapt to these enforced policies hence preventing local governments from executing the necessary autonomy to 'develop' contextually relevant educational systems and practices. To address the world's 'development' challenges, the World Bank initiated the 'World Declaration on Education for All' (EFA) in 1990. Originally referred to as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and now the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this action framework advocates 'for all' to participate in the global economy, and the SDGs recent response to the COVID-19 epidemic reflects this given its emphasis on economic recovery. It states: 'COVID-19 is spreading human suffering, destabilising the global economy and upending the lives of billions of people around the globe …. This is the time for change, for a profound systemic shift to a more sustainable economy that works for both people and the planet' (Sustainable Development Goals 2020). The SDGs are a neoliberal hegemonic force guised under the rubric of educational equality and access for all.

The World Bank's policy mandate of Education for the Knowledge Economy (EKE) 'is aimed at helping countries adapt their entire education systems to the new challenges of the learning economy' by producing an educated workforce equipped with the latest knowledge, information, ideas, and skills to increase economic productivity and growth (Spring 2009: 38). The prescribed curriculum emphasises 'literacy, foreign languages, science, math, and civic participation … [not] … geography, history, and any form of cultural studies' for all (Spring 2009: 45). It is believed that the former subjects will attend to the worldwide techno-industrial demand for the 21-century skills required that centre around reasoning, problem solving, innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship, to name a few. Most governments now have an established educational policy supporting the active use of technology; some have signed UNESCO's Qingdao Declaration which promotes ICT use to achieve the SDGs targets. Multinational corporations have marketed and set-up their technologies and educational materials/resources banking on the

dependency of its usage (Spring 2009; Selwyn 2013). Education is now transiting towards heavier computer reliance in lieu of face-to-face classroom-based teaching, making learning portable through tablets, and certain 'knowledge' accessible through the 'worldwide' web. The underlying force of ICT in education is to competitively prepare learners for participation in the global economy and economic growth as it is perceived that nations with high performing learners (as 'measured' by technological performance measures) will generate stronger economies (Carnoy 2014). While the current research surrounding the learning effectiveness of technological deployment is conflicting, it is clear that education is a lucrative market for MNCs who are teaching for the global knowledge economy.

Within higher education specifically, an international analysis indicates a paradigmatic shift from a socially oriented system to an economically oriented system in which massification is underway. The pressure for nation-states to increase the quantity and quality of their education system has been activated by neoliberal globalisation's demand for graduates with higher skills and credentials for the knowledge-economy. For those already employed, the push for 'up-to-date' knowledge and skills has made lifelong learning 'essential for individuals to keep pace with the constantly changing global job market and [advances in] technology' (Spring 2009: 49). The promotion of science and technology has pushed countries to heavily promote research, teaching, and program designs within science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM). As local governments anticipate attracting foreign direct investment for the building up of local high-tech industries to boost their respective economy, they are increasingly relying on higher education institutions to become collaborative leaders in their national innovation systems. Higher education institutions are now working with industries in the production of knowledge; universities produce STEM- based knowledge and industries provide the 'know-how'.

4 Knowledge: The Struggle over the Meaning and Value/s of It

The previous sections explored the multi-centuric interconnected histories of colonialisation, globalisation, and neoliberalisation. The culmination of physical, material, human, economic, political, socio-cultural, financial, and educational exploitation has maintained the world-wide division of labour, which

'apartheids' the world into core countries ('[over]developed', high skill, know-ledge-intensive production), and semi-periphery/periphery countries ('deve-loping'/ 'underdeveloped', low-skill, labor-intensive) (Arrighi 2005; Waller-stein 2004). Educational decisions are issued by the 'global designers' and global financial planners (IFIs) who have tasked educational institutions, irre-spective of geopolitical location, to develop learners with the necessary skills and dispositions of positivistic scientific and technological knowledge amidst the lived realities of 'Other' concurrent knowledge systems (e.g. see, Escobar 2004; Kapoor & Jordan 2019; Mignolo 2000; Neerjaj 2007). The dan-gers of this mono-centric, decultural, neoliberal educational design, is that it is used to 'control the "real" and what is "truth"' in our daily lives (Apple 2000: 45).

Counter-hegemonic anti-neoliberal/globalisation movements have emerged in the North and the South at unprecedented rates, by anti/de-globalists, who seek an alternative[s] counter-hegemonic system[s] of econo-mic governance (Escobar 2004; Kapoor & Jordan 2019). Conscientisation and agency rooted in anti-globalisation movements among the masses across the globe in re/action to the accumulated violence of MNCs/neoliberalism have been successfully observed. For example, in Chiapas, Mexico, citizens actively protested the land grabbing and contaminated drinking water produced by MNCs; and in New York, the *Occupy-Wall-Street* movement declared its anti-neoliberal global stance in response to the financial bailouts provided to corporate élites from public funds (Sethi 2011). These movements, and many others across the globe, are collectively questioning: '…who has the right to "name the world"?' (Apple 2000:45) and 'whose knowledge is of most worth?' (Apple 2000: 46), and are seeking alternatives to the neoliberal global agenda. The following section introduces 'te[a]chnolog[able]y', which is a term that I have coined to dismantle the knowledge and values of the neoliberal world system, with a view to engender an 'another world[s]' with '[O]ther' knowledge[s] and contextually-based systems.

5 Te[a]chnolog[able]y: From Cogs to Cognitives

Te[a]chnolog[able]y draws heavily from the work of anti/deglobalists (see for example, Bello 2005; de Sousa Santos 2008; Escobar 2004; Kapoor & Jordan 2019; Mignolo 2000 and Quijano 2000), who are calling for decolonial alternatives to the current hierarchical world-system dominated by ongoing colonisation, so that societies are self-reliant (Nyere 1968), governing their

respective economies and not the economy governing them (Polyani 1944) by dismantling the hegemonic structures of the WTO and IFIs, and reorienting local economies from export to local production guided by localised know-ledge[s] (Bello 2005). To te[a]chnolog[able]y then is to not teach (formally, informally, and non-formally) the knowledge manufactured by neoliberalism, but rather unpack and teach knowledgeably about the catastrophic realities and disorders of neoliberal globalisation, with a view to develop and prepare societal/ educational spaces (i.e. schools, media, workplace, communities, governance) with tangible alternatives to capitalism inclusive of 'Other[s]' knowledge[s] and ways of knowing and being. This anti-systemic decolonial move/ment foregrounds the multi-centuric history of colonialisation, globali-sation, and neoliberalism as the core unit of analyses to paradigmatically understand how the world works, how it is divided (inclusive of physical and ideological), and why it is the way it is, given that '… one cannot act otherwise unless one can think otherwise ….' (Giroux 2005: 16).

To te[a]chnolog[able]y requires an architectural understanding of co-loniality, neoliberalism/globalisation and its complexity, along with ac*knowledg*ing the coloniality of power and epistemic imperialism. To te[a]chnolog[able]y is not restricted to the classroom but rather is hinged to all spaces of life as education (formally, informally, and non-formally) given neoliberalism's/globalisation's hegemony. Therefore, this enabling praxiologi-cal move/ment applies to all, North and South, irrespective of 'race,' class, gender, caste, sexual orientation, dis/abilities, citizenship, urban/rural and profession, to name but a few categorisations. It is explicitly understood that the intersectionalities of these diverse identity markers will facilitate in influencing and shaping the diverse ways in which individuals will engage with te[a]chnolog[able]y. To prevent the engendering of another set of hierarchical dominations, what must remain central in this move/ment and its practices, is the active decolonisation of the current apartheid world-system without feeding or breeding further, or new[s], hegemony between and within nations, and valuing the human worth of all. Te[a]chnolog[able]y is an enabling move/me[a]nt to move individuals into collective tangible action towards countering neoliberalism/globalisation, while simultaneously cultivating 'ano-ther world[s]' which ac*knowledge*s 'Other[s]' knowledge[s] praxiologically.

Within [higher] education spaces, te[a]chnolog[able]y lends itself to all faculties and institutional spaces (i.e. teaching, research, administrative, curricular, publishing, policy, planning, leading, and managing), given that

institutional alignment is key. To te[a]chnolog[able]y is to restore the space of higher education as an institution of thought with diverse thinkers that serve to understand the world/s we live/in, and *how to* serve the world/s we live/in beyond the neoliberal agenda. Institutionally, this requires the decision-making around research, teaching, administrative designs, and institutional politics be in collective accordance with one another and not influenced or dominated by neoliberal policies and mandates. A shift to research and funding that assists in remedying our current historical moment as opposed to a disproportionate concentration on technological and capitalist advancement is required, given the role of research in informing policy and practice, and the teaching-research nexus. Pedagogically and institutionally, te[a]chnolog[able]y moves beyond creating cogs of neoliberalism to cognitive learners who are equipped to generate sovereign self-reliant practices as well as dismantle and debilitate neoliberalism and coloniality at its root.

To counter-neoliberalism and achieve alternatives, spaces of/for engagement must be created. In addition to embedding critical/multiple perspectives within a discipline, interdisciplinary engagement alongside existing research and scholarship within the fields of international 'development', 'critical' global education, or citizenship education, for example, can be imbibed in any subject area. What is essential is a foundational understanding of neoliberal globalisation's hegemony and worldwide destruction, and dialogical deliberations and active practices that focus on 'how to' create alternatives in the absence of neoliberal ideologies and epistemes. These are [some of] the core practices I deploy within the context of my own teaching (undergraduate and graduate), research, and supervision. It is not a seamless process. The ideological and conceptual disruptions that emerge for students during discussions for example, are valued and attended to with care both in the moment and then through subsequent pedagogy. The use of tangible 'real' examples and contextual/local examples and activities are deployed for relevancy purposes to reinforce the realities of neoliberalism as opposed to a phenomenon occurring elsewhere. Te[a]chnolog[able]y is ultimately about creating the 'educated' graduate within an educational institution and not the credentialised graduate who has learned some things - rather some thing - to be able to actively contribute to addressing the neoliberal/global pandemic seriously and judiciously. The move/me[a]nt towards alternatives does not involve neoliberalism's epistemology nor ideology as there are no neoliberal solutions for the neoliberal global pandemic.

6   Conclusion: So/ Now What?

This discussion paper has endeavored to disclose the pandora's box linked to the convenient deployment of technology pre/during/post COVID-19 by contouring the multi-centuric neoliberal global pandemic which uses education (formal, informal, and non-formal) as a public space to metastasize its 'manufactured consent'. I have advocated that we te[a]chnolog[able]y in our respective lived spaces to unveil the destructive systemic realities of neoliberalism/globalisation with the aim of creating 'another world[s]' that ac*knowledge*s Other[s] knowledge[s] and allows space for different ways of knowing and being in the world beyond the mono-systemicism of capitalism. The deliberations within this paper are timely and urgent given the accelerated use of technology prompted by COVID-19 and emergent fashionable moves to maintain the trajectory of this practice. It is acknowledged that no specific pragmatic approach[es} has been provided to operationalise this move/ment other than to teach critically about neoliberalism and 'develop' different ways of knowing and being in the world. This is deliberate to abstain from engendering a hierarchical hegemonic move given the acknowledgement of multi-centric realities. However, a conceptual spine rooted in decolonisation in which to dismantle the current world system, coloniality of power, epistemic imperialism, and cognitive imperialism has been designated for (re)imagining and manufacturing change contextually. This paper is thus calling for educational spaces (formal, informal and non-formal) to te[a]chnolog[able]y and generate actions, practices, research, and move/ments counter to neoliberalism through the praxis of learning from one an'O'ther irrespective of geopolitical locale.

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Distancing Learning from [the Spatiality of] Higher Education to [the Context of] the Home

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Abstract

This chapter argues that connecting online and effectively shifting teaching and learning from the space of higher education to the space of the home during the COVID-19 pandemic, will result in something fundamental being disconnected in students' education. This disconnect lies in the *distancing of learning* from the context of knowing. Mental, social and physical distancing from meaningful engagement in everyday spatial practices with others and the higher education space could be dangerous for students. It is through engagements within the *informal spaces* of higher education that students come to know of themselves and others and that they broaden their conceptions of education beyond narrow, disciplinary content silos. The potential to shift individualistic pursuit of academic success and self-development to a collective knowing of what it means to be a student of higher education and a citizen of a democratic society, could effectively be lost by going online.

The chapter highlights the benefits of students' engagement, physically, socially and mentally, with higher education spaces, by drawing from the literature that constituted part of a larger PhD study on students' knowings of informal spaces of food, accommodation and transport on campus. It employs Foucault's heterotopia of crisis and Soja's theory of spatial justice to argue for a re-appraisal of informal spaces beyond the notions of welfare, that recognises such spaces as potential active contributors to a holistic education where the benefits of being here [on campus], could far outweigh those of being there [home].

Keywords: higher education spaces, informal spaces, crisis, heterotopia, spatial justice

1 Introduction: COVID-19 – A Time of Crisis

To curb the spread of the Coronavirus in March 2020, universities across South Africa commenced an early mid-term break and closed all residences and campuses to students, initiating a mass exodus from institutions across the country. Students returned home with no certainty as to when they would return to university or when their education would resume. This indefinite suspension was confirmed when lockdown commenced on 26 March.

In an effort to not lose the academic year, all South African universities switched to emergency remote online learning. At the time, most contact-based universities had resumed online teaching, although with varying levels of preparedness, implementation dates and approaches; those whose students reside predominantly in rural areas with associated inferior internet connectivity, opted to wait the pandemic out and to resume only when full contact learning can occur (Universities South Africa 2020).

Discourses in the media over lockdown addressed conducive environments for learning at home, institutions' readiness to deliver online teaching and learning, and proposed pedagogies and assessment strategies for going online (Brooks *et al.* 2020). These discourses polarised several aspects: the public good of universities and private institutions' opportunism in seizing this online moment (Walwyn 2020); well-resourced and less-resourced institutions; students from lower and higher socio-economic backgrounds (Arnhold & Bassett 2020), and urban and rural homes, in terms of their potential to both deliver and receive online education (Mzileni 2020). Such polarisation is of no of interest to this discussion; rather, what is important is that these discourses tended to be located within the formal curriculum, with higher education as the provider of knowledge and the shift from face-to-face to asynchronous and blended learning opportunities in the delivery of content (Walwyn 2020). Little was said of other learnings not formally accredited by the institution, which are stimulated in higher education environments.

In a discussion on the COVID-19 crisis with reference to what would be lost through contact-based universities going online, Harari (CordenYou Tube 2020) spoke of the loss of the 'break', i.e., the periods between formal timetabled learning in which exciting conversations could be held amongst peers. Harari referred to such conversations as an in-between action that happens informally, suggesting that as there is no *in-between time* online, there is no opportunity for break conversations.

I would like to extend Harari's argument to suggest that there is a break IN conversations in going online. This disruption is a consequence of not only a loss of *in-between time* but also of *in-between space,* as important conversations that contribute to students' informal learnings on campus require both co-presence and physical spaces.

This chapter argues that there is a spatiality within and of break conversations and the informal learning that arises there which is lost in going online. Habib (2020) captured this sentiment when he posed the question of whether this pandemic signifies the end of the physical brick and mortar university as we know it. His answer affirms that not only is the physical space of higher education important, but those spaces that deliver the formal curriculum are just as important as those that do not, because of their contribution to developing holistic, well-rounded students. The learning Habib (2020a: Online) is speaking about includes 'the development of soft skills, consolidation of an intelligentsia, and the promotion of a cohesive citizenry'. Walker (2018) further notes the potential of higher education as both a space of public good, and the development of student capabilities[1] therein as a potential public-good outcome.

If we are to contemplate what is lost in this time of emergency remote online learning, while recognising the potential of the higher education space for students and society as a whole, we need to think deeply about the potential of the physical space of contact-based institutions.[2] This chapter addresses coming to university as a step in an individual's transition to adulthood and in the formation of students as part of a collective project (Walker 2018) in the development of democratic citizenship. This is explored through informal spaces and space use on campus with reference to those spaces in which students interact as part of their everyday life on campus, including those

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[1] Walker (2018) proposes that higher education fosters capabilities of personhood self-formation, epistemic contribution, and adequacy of material resources. The epistemic contribution is the ability to access knowledge and to reason critically, the material resources enhance well-being and self-formation promotes recognition and social inclusion.

[2] South Africa has both contact and distance options for students of higher education. For the purposes of this chapter, only contact-based learning is addressed as the teaching and learning mode for these students would have been the most radically affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

related to food, accommodation and transport.

In considering these issues, it should be borne in mind that South African campuses are not neutral spaces that serve as passive backdrops to erudite conversations. They both affect and are affected by political action (Ngxiza 2020; Habib 2020b) and social-political issues that rage on their peripheries and enter the campus space. Student protests such as #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall have disrupted and continue to impact the campus space. Furthermore, many students have had a disrupted education due to academic or financial exclusion, with this number being disproportionately high within the cohort of students that would previously have been excluded from university education (BusinessTech 2019). The intent of this chapter is not to romanticise campus environments as ideal spaces for learning. Rather, its purpose is to recognise the potential of the informal spaces on campus [towards the holistic development of students] and that the opportunities afforded therein are not available to all.

Using Foucault's (1997) heterotopia and heterotopic space the chapter argues that the campus is a heterotopic space [a world within the world] that is forced to function in a different mode in the time of COVID-19. Heterotopias affect the world around them, and this is palpably felt in every student's household as a consequence of the adoption of distributed learning, where every home is compelled to make space for learning. This raises questions about the continued relevance of campus spaces. Heterotopias also house thresholds to opportunities [liminal spaces] (Bonasera 2019) within their informal spaces. The potential of informal spaces to both address spatial injustices and to promote the soft skills that could be more equitably accessible to a broader body of students, is also addressed.

The chapter begins by exploring the campus as a heterotopic space and what constitutes the notions of home space. This serves as a means to comprehend what can be learnt from students' experiences of a campus space operating in crisis mode and in the home, in the idealistic mode. It then addresses the reality of informal spaces on campus in their development of cohesive citizenry, suggesting that the contribution these spaces currently make falls short of their potential. Idealistic notions of what higher education spaces could enable, need to be addressed within the reality of current spatial inequity within these informal spaces that are in desperate need of redress. Thinking of a post-COVID-19 campus enables a re-assessment of the purpose of the campus space in the development of the whole student, and where higher

education currently falls short in achieving this goal.

1.1   Higher Education as a Heterotopia of Crisis

Foucault (1997) refers to 'other' places as spaces, and institutions that are not part of the stable normalcy or everyday existence. Also referred to as heterotopias, these are worlds within worlds that mirror what is happening on the inside, yet upset what is happening on the outside. Foucault (1997) defines several conceptions of heterotopia and heterotopic spaces which I briefly describe with the intention of suggesting how the campus space constitutes a heterotopic space.

The first is a heterotopia of crisis which *'comprises privileged or sacred or forbidden places that are reserved for the individual who finds himself in a state of crisis'* (Foucault 1997: 3). These crises are of long or short duration such as giving birth, old age, and a honeymoon. Foucault refers to the spaces that constitute crises as 'elsewhere' and occurring 'anywhere.' He asserts that, in contemporary culture, heterotopias of crisis have been replaced by heterotopias of deviance, that is, places which remove people from society when their behaviour deviates from the norm. Prisons, hospitals and psychiatric clinics are examples of heterotopias of deviance.

A heterotopia which is of interest here is an existing heterotopia that has not disappeared but is now functioning differently. Foucault explores this through the example of the translocation of the cemetery from the centre of society to the periphery. This 'other city' outside of the city emerged as people's perceptions of death changed from representing a trace of our existence to that of death as related to sickness.

Heterotopias of long duration occur through the storing of artefacts in a single space such as museums and libraries. In contrast, heterotopias of short duration surface in the form of celebrations such as fairs or markets that emerge in empty zones within or on the outskirts of the city for a limited period of time and then disappear. Heterotopias are also associated with layers of exclusivity in that one is either sent there by force or one can only enter by special permission. Furthermore, heterotopic spaces may seem open, but mask exclusions that are only realised once within.

Drawing from this description, I suggest that the campus space is this 'other' space, positioned as a quasi-real world within the real world, a world poised between a monastery and the marketplace (Cantor & Schomberg 2003).

It is neither of these, yet has characteristics of both as a place to retreat to for intellectual growth, that is at the same time connected and responsive to communities on the outside. However, formal access to the campus space is not guaranteed, as entrance requirements need to be met. Furthermore, once inside, exclusions are generated through policies and processes that serve as constant reminders to students of the tenuous nature of their links to this place.

In the time of COVID-19, the campus has assumed a heterotopia of crisis which instead of being a space to which people are sent to overcome a crisis, is banishing students and staff from its core and operating in a different mode by switching to remote, emergency online learning. A parallel can be drawn with Foucault's description of the cemetery's relocation to the periphery as its meaning and significance changed. As the fear of potential sickness or death loomed, institutions moved their teaching and learning from being contact-based within specific campus spaces to becoming peripheral and dispersed within tens of thousands of students' homes. The space of higher education has shifted [virtually] from the quasi-public realm of the campus to the privacy of the home, effectively putting an end to contact-based learning as we know it for an undefined period of time.

The purpose of reflecting on the university as a heterotopic space is to suggest how this space is different and 'other' and, consequently, alienating. This is even more the case as it purges ancillary functions and spaces to become a virtual space for which an additional level of eligibility is required for learning, in the form of internet connectivity and a conducive home environment. Access to learning for some students is denied by virtue of their spatio-geographic location and the socio-economic circumstances in which they find themselves. This is not to say that universities are dystopias or that they are alienating for all, but to recognise that their mode has consequences for how the curriculum is experienced and felt in both its physical and virtual existence. However, all is not lost, as promise lies in heterotopias themselves.

Heterotopias host liminal spaces that serve as boundaries or thresholds between areas. These spaces which students move through[3] (Tarini 2015) have

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[3] Liminal space is described in the literature as either a physical space that is moved through, that has no real purpose as a destination in itself, or the psychological space of uncertainty or moving between one state and level of conscience to another. For the purpose of this chapter, I embrace both the physical and the mental aspects of liminality.

no real purpose as a destination or real existence in and of themselves. Liminal spaces serve spaces that come before or after them and are understood spatially as doorways into a room, the doctor's waiting room, corridors and stairwells. They serve as markers of the transitions from one time to another, one space to another, one culture to another and one action to another.

Liminality is also a psychological space of uncertainty, moving from one state and level of conscience to another. It is a mental space of uncertainty (Barnett 2007) that students experience while at university and is associated with students' actions of resistance, agency and capitulation (Wood 2012). Informal spaces are then understood as both mental and physical space in which students can exercise their political selves and as a space in which to engage face to face with other students.

Informal spaces on campus include parking lots, bus-stops, socialising spaces and residences - in-between spaces where students gather at will. They provide the opportunity for diverse bodies of students to interact and engage with one another, potentially contributing to the engendering of democratic citizenship (Klemenčič 2015). Informal spaces accommodate the complex mixing of different students and their multiple identities. Rather than being dominated by a single exclusionary identity, informal space could be seen to be full of internal conflict as different identities contest for their use. They are spaces where different social relations can come together to construct new forms of social interaction. Informal spaces are thus seen as dynamic, and enabling of practices and relations, while at the same time not being immune to forms of oppression or exclusion constructed both from within and elsewhere.

The power hierarchies that exist in informal spaces tend to benefit some students over others and some spaces over others. This contributes to what Soja (2010) refers to as spatial [in]justices, where the spatiality of students' lives can have both positive and negative impacts, enabling, constraining or disempowering them. Hence the spatiality of students' lives as having the potential to be just as well as unjust (Soja 2009). Spatial justice is further denoted in the impartial and equitable dissemination of socially-valued resources in space and opportunities for the student to make use of them. These resources include housing, healthcare and education (Soja 2009). In contrast, spatial injustice is produced in the patterns of unfair distribution of resources and infrastructure, which Soja states are reflected in spatial structures of privilege. Spatial injustice is also reflected in processes that can occur at

multiple scales [macro, meso and micro] leading to the uneven development of some spaces and consequently of some students on campus. Multi-scaler spatial injustices can occur as a consequence of decisions and actions taken by government and higher education management, and from within the student body.

These spatial injustices are most notable in the spaces related to students' material needs wherein difference in access and use and the associated benefits or privileges derived therefrom, would be most profound. They include spaces in which food is consumed, transport related spaces and the various typologies of accommodation available to students.

In terms of accommodation, I dwell on the home environment as its relationship with the higher education space is the most pertinent during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is not to negate other accommodation arrangements that students may have had access to, such as living with friends, extended family or remaining in other forms of private accommodation.

2   Disrupted Home Space [Space of the Individual]

The relationship between higher education spaces and the home environment is important in understanding how these entities support students' development. Some students may go so far as to reject their home environments when coming to university, while others use assistance from their home environments to move forward at university (Soudien 2008). It is thus useful to understand what constitutes 'a home' and what it may offer students to promote their mobility through higher education.

There is no singular understanding of home or the significance it may hold for students (Kenyon 1999). Theoretical representations of the home are of a stable place of human consciousness, remote and womb-like (Bachelard 1964). It is a mental rather than a physical space or a shelter in which to day-dream, protecting the dreamer, and allowing dreams to occur undisturbed. The home space is further associated with a place to retreat to, where freedom, creativity, and expression are possible (Goldsack 1999). Social relations (Easthope 2004) also contribute to engendering a sense of home where the individual resides within the familiarity and security of the family unit, creating a safe space. However, conceptions of home are not only bound to the house and relations therein, but are also associated with social groupings and spaces that extend into the neighbourhood or beyond the immediate area in which the

home is located to include the extended family, church, and sporting communities. Whether the home is understood as a physical or mental space, it is a space that one desires to return to after a long period of absence. Most of these associations with home are individualistic notions that acknowledge the role it could play in students' identity formation (Kenyon 1999).

However, these positive notions of home are not necessarily every student's reality. The home could also be a contested space filled with hegemonies of control and lacking in privacy or respite. In the time of COVID-19, stability or disruption within the home space were set aside as the door to the home was effectively forced open to invite public education in. Students needed to accommodate space and a time for learning within this environment, failing which their education would effectively be suspended or worse still, terminated.

This is not to suggest that students have not studied or do not study at home, or do not have space or the time to study. Some clearly do. The point is that expectations of online learning, both in terms of concentrated time and space for learning were greater, and the links to teaching were more tenuous. Online learning also exposed the precariousness of students' home environments, visually in zoom calls, and in their notable absence when internet connectivity failed them.

Further compounding factors for the home environment in the time of social distancing and lockdown, was that the home space literally shrank to the physical confines of the immediate neighbourhood and the physical, social and mental constraints of the home. As a consequence of the legacies of apartheid planning, South African homes and their suburbs tend to be located within distinct and homogenous socio-economic, racial and cultural clusters, leading to limited opportunities for engagement with others [unlike themselves] outside of these neighbourhood spaces. This is not to refute the potential of learning from chance encounters within homes or neighbourhoods, but merely to note that these were likely to be of limited diversity and already familiar to students. Face-to-face contact and encounters may have shrunk to narrowly defined neighbourhood zones, but virtual connections for students with boundless internet connectivity grew exponentially.

Balancing the home as a learning and living space in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis is a very different space physically, mentally and socially from that in which students found themselves when the academic year began on campus in February 2020.

3 The Space of Higher Education

Turning back the clock to explore what would have been the start of the academic year and the beginning of face-to-face learning calls for the hands to be tweaked further back to examine what South African campuses set out to be and were evolving to become some years into their post-apartheid existence. I briefly delve into the inequity across institutions, across the student body and within institutions' informal spaces to set the context of South African institutions, to suggest that although universities aspire to be spaces of democratic or cohesive citizenry, their reality falls short of achieving this aim.

Reddy (2004: 6 - 7) notes that the vision for higher education institutions post-apartheid was to:

> … contribute towards overcoming the legacies of the country's racialised development, transform the society along democratic and more equitable lines, and make the country more competitive in the global economic system.

However, this vision was compromised in the restructuring of 36 institutions of higher learning, in the post-apartheid era. Cooper (2015: 248) noted an important indicator of inequality that arose through this process, in which many of the former historically white universities [HWU], more than half at the time, as well as one historically coloured university, were excluded from the mergers. In contrast, most of what were considered lower status technical institutions and many of the historically African universities [HAU] underwent mergers. The latter bore an apartheid-era legacy of being historically underfunded and under-resourced in comparison to the HWU. Cooper's observations suggest that the structures of inequality across the now restructured 26 institutions were built into the architectural framework of the new system via what was merged or not merged.

Cooper (2015) further speculated that at some of the upper band universities [HWU], most students come from middle to upper-income families, while students from working class and lower-income families are a minority across all race groups. For Cooper (2015: 238), this demonstrates that the higher education system in HWUs has shifted from reproducing inequality based on race during apartheid to one that in 2012, 'reproduces an equally

serious social inequality … on students' 'race-class' position'. In the HAU, student racial demographics largely remain unchanged, with an increased number of students from working-class families.

Cooper's (2015) study highlights systemic issues that have perpetuated rather than addressed social inequality within higher education institutions. Attempts at social transformation within institutions have not led to the integration of the student body (Cornell & Kessi 2016; Swartz *et al.* 2017; Higham 2012), and the student experience of racial discrimination and alienation on campus persists despite increasing student diversity.

3.1   The Knowledge Agenda Eclipsed by the Welfare Agenda

Annexure 8 of the Higher Education Summit (2015: 2) called for the creation of a new narrative of real, radical transformation as a matter of urgency. The report set out broad principles on how this transformation could take place by refocussing on knowledge as the centre of the transformation agenda. However, Jansen (2017) asserts that it is becoming increasingly evident within South African higher education institutions, that the knowledge agenda is being eclipsed by the need for social welfare redress. Jansen (2017) uses the term 'welfare university' to describe post-apartheid universities in his book, *As by fire: The end of the South African university*.

With the rise of the welfare university, spaces of privilege both within and across the different universities are becoming more apparent, and knowledge or knowing of their spatiality is critical for spatial justice. While formal access to higher education spaces may have changed, the physical containers and spaces which house student diversification have remained largely unaltered. This is not to discount the conscious shifts that have sought to re-architecture spaces through new designs and provisioning for the growing enrollment of 'non-traditional*'* (Jama *et al.* 2008), 'first-generation Black disadvantaged students' (Fataar 2018) from marginalised communities (Langa *et al.* 2017).

3.2   Students Becoming Mobile

At the start of the academic year, students' geographical mobility from home to university would have denoted a fundamental threshold transition from being a young person to becoming an adult (Christie 2007). Of the many choices students would have made with regard to accessing a contact-based

education, one option would have been where they would live while studying. They would have chosen to either stay at home and commute to university or leave home and live closer to campus. However, pre-COVID-19, some students, especially within South Africa's rural areas and townships, had no choice but to leave home to access education. The obstacles of distance and unconducive learning environments required that they moved closer to campus. Becoming mobile was necessary to access contact-based higher education institutions. These push factors are enabled by bursaries and loans offered by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) that cover the learning and living costs of students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds.

3.3 Encountering Difference in University Spaces

At the beginning of the year, campus spaces would have been full of students socialising on the lawns, in the cafés and in the open spaces between buildings. Students have opportunities both on campus and in their residential accommodation to spend long periods of time with fellow students. Universities provide many spaces and places for encounters with difference, potentially exposing students to diverse views, cultures, and sexual orientations, with the potential to equip them for living in a multicultural society.

Informal interaction and learning can occur frequently and freely in the informal spaces of the campus located between formal, highly regulated spaces such as lecture theatres and seminar rooms and non-formal spaces that are self-regulated, such as libraries and LANs. Informal spaces encourage interaction by chance or deliberately, and are places where students and faculty mix, mingle, pass by one another and interact should they chose to do so. They host practices such as studying, collaborating, and socialising (Lomas & Oblinger 2006) and contribute to feelings of belonging, personal and professional growth and being part of the intellectual and social life of the university (Gebhardt 2014).

The institution's welfare (Jansen 2017) responsibility also manifests in the informal spaces of higher education through the provision of services such as food, accommodation and transport. It is in these informal spaces that students from different socio-economic groups have the opportunity to interact with others and become aware of their differences. However, the South African reality suggests that this has not been the case.

3.4 Lost Opportunities in Food, Accommodation and Transport Spaces

While food and leisure spaces on campus provide great places for students to socialise, levels of food insecurity on South African campuses remain high (Munro *et al.* 2013), thereby rendering tenuous the potential for students to engage in eating together as a means to build a sense of community and belonging. Studies (Dominguez-Whitehead & Whitehead 2014: 65) highlight asymmetrical relations between those students who are food secure and those who are not, and how these groups cannot engage in equitable social encounters, let alone share the same spatial settings. This highlights the limitations of the university informal space in bringing students of different backgrounds and socio-economic groupings together around food.

Residences are spaces in which students tend to spend longer periods of time with others; however, these relations are normally based on being *thrown together* (Massey 2005) with students they do not know, which is not always ideal. Managing relations with other students and access to specific spaces and conditions within incidental co-living arrangements to study can prove difficult. Yet, these spaces also offer opportunities to develop academic support and lasting friendships (Xulu-Gama 2019). This potential is, however, limited in private residential developments, where the trend is to maximise bed space at the expense of *communal space,* thereby limiting the potential for students to interact more fluidly in the daily activities of eating, cooking, bathing or studying. It is also possible for residential spaces to become homogenous groupings of students of similar socio-economic class given the market forces that dictate rental values and university policies on residence access based on student need.

The report of the Department of Higher Education and Training (2011) on the Ministerial Committee for the Review of the Provision of Student Housing at South African Universities highlighted the undesirable conditions in student accommodation and the location thereof. It noted that many students were living in overcrowded and squalid conditions, that the severe shortage of student accommodation led to students being exploited by private rental agreements, and that many students were living in unsafe areas. The quality of student accommodation has a direct bearing on their relations with others and their potential for success within the university (Kuh 2011).

The ability to be mobile and access the campus space is a critical factor

in engaging in campus life (Kenyon 2011). Further benefits include the ability to attend classes which supports student retention (Manik 2015) and enables access to on-campus learning resources such as facilities, infrastructure and people (Allen & Farber 2018). Studies on students' mobility to campus have directly linked access to student achievement and poor access to compromised learning, social and other campus-related activities (Kenyon 2011). Getting to campus is thus critical for students.

Mbara & Celliers' (2013) study on students living off-campus who spend long periods of time travelling, shows that this limits the social-contact opportunities with other students. The authors (2013) assert that such contact is essential to enhance the formal learning and personal development of students. Being on campus and spending time on campus have also been associated with students' identity construction (Christie 2007), and cultural, social and economic capital (Leatherwood & O'Connell 2003), thus making a positive contribution to their development. This privileges students that have more fluid and direct access to campus over those who do not. How then, could students living far from campus integrate into the campus environment, if their time spent on campus is so tenuous?

Ironically, the tenuous nature of the link between home and campus is being challenged in this time of COVID-19. The challenge of physical mobility for students is being usurped by educational mobility, but this is not without emotional, technological and internet accessibility challenges. The mobility of education is, however, not compensating for the potential of informal encounters with a diversity of students across socio-economic, racial, gender, cultural and other lines. While informal campus spaces are falling short of their potential within the contact-based South African university as we know it, being on campus is beneficial.

4 Conclusion: Return to Heterotopia

Let us return to the heterotopic argument that the university is a space of difference; its role is to unsettle the world around it, but it is not the world. However, the notion that within the fabric of the university lies the offering of a democratic and cohesive citizenry, it is at best utopic and at worst, a fallacy. Realising this ideal may not be possible in the short term as its trouble lies deeper than the spaces themselves; it lies in the systems that created them, in the processes that maintain them and in the privileges that are still enabled for

those students gifted with more mobility and of higher socio-economic class.

However, it is not an ideal that we should relinquish as within these informal spaces lie opportunities for change. In my view, some qualities within the idealised home environment could prove useful in addressing the 2030 National Development Plan goals and in re-imagining campus spaces beyond the necessary welfare services to provide the physiological needs of food, accommodation and transport. The qualities of home include a supportive environment through both family and extended networks, a place to dream and a space for creative expression. Supportive environments require a level of familiarity of both the people and the place. How could university spaces enable familiarity in order to better facilitate students' integration into campus and campus culture? Dreaming requires the space to imagine future possibilities of becoming, without fear of being judged or discredited. How could university spaces contribute to enabling students to imagine tangible futures for themselves? Creative expression calls for a space in which students can empower themselves to be in whatever manner or form they may choose, without fear of ridicule and stigma. How could university spaces be more accepting of individual differences and diversity?

The COVID-19 crisis has upset the normal operation of contact-based universities but has also offered an opportunity to reflect on some of the core values of such institutions. The potential of brick-and-mortar structures and the spaces in between to serve as contributors to a holistic education, means that the benefits of learning here [on campus] should in time far outweigh learning there [home].

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De-humanising the Humanities Curriculum: Social Distancing and Virtual Learning in Post COVID-19 Higher Education in South Africa

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Abstract

Since its emergence in 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought into sharp focus in the public consciousness the extreme inequalities in many aspects of life and the disabling poverty that characterise our educational landscape. In addition, the pandemic has jolted our identities and shifted our humanity from offline selves to online personae. This paper is a conceptual study that uses desktop methodologies to advance its thesis. As such, it relies on personal reflections, articles, and online reviews to make a pragmatic analysis of the future of the humanities during and in a post COVID-19 era where communication and interaction between humans and society have been disrupted through social distancing and lockdowns. The objectives are to examine the impact of social distance on the humanities curriculum and how virtual learning has mediated distance in the social distance in light of the pandemic. The study also raises questions and considers the critical analyses these require to provide curriculum and educational workers and scholars at large with ways of understanding educational practice, both within and outside of schools, in the wake of the pandemic. The paper builds on Dewey's Engagement Theory, asserting that the future of humanities is threatened if the humanities curriculum does not quickly recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic by re-inventing new strategies for effective teaching and learning.

It concludes by imploring teachers, researchers, and theorists to reconsider their foundational understanding of what counts as pedagogy and of how and where the process of education occurs in the fast-changing society of today.

Keywords: humanities; curriculum; social distance; e-learning; education; higher education

1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid response it necessitated has exacerbated the already acute financial stress faced by many universities worldwide. In developing countries such as South Africa, this crisis seriously challenges the sustainability of democratic, affordable education pursuing a public good. In the face of a recession and dwindling revenue streams, universities now face the future with growing angst, if not trepidation. Considerable resources were invested in mitigating the effect of the pandemic on teaching and learning. At the University of KwaZulu-Natal, students were provided with laptops and free data, and staff were trained in using online technology in the switch to the virtual classroom. Ironically, a pandemic that brought death, turmoil, grief and financial woes upon the university community was also the force that galvanised the university's innovation to ensure its survival and maintain the quality and integrity of its teaching and learning processes.

This study posits that the current crisis is also an opportunity to re-imagine the university. It does so by offering a philosophical and practical purview of the humanistic approach in education grounded in a balance between cognitive and affective learning (Firdaus & Mariyat 2017). The pandemic has interrupted the shared experiences of learning, empathy, and human emotional exchanges that form the underlying pedagogical approach to the humanities curriculum. Consequently, the study raises the question: how can the interpersonal and intrapersonal dialogue and reflection that underlie humanistic pedagogy be sustained in the context of social distancing and virtual learning during and in a post COVID-19 pandemic? Pellegrino and Hilton (2015), in *Education for Life and Work: Developing Transferable Knowledge and Skills in the Twenty-First Century,* provide a taxonomy of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills that embody the learning characteristics in the humanistic approach to education. Table 1 lists these characteristics.

Table 1: Characteristics of the humanistic approach to education

Interpersonal Skills	Intrapersonal Skills
Communication	Flexibility
Collaboration	Adaptability
Team Work	Artistic and Cultural Appreciation
Cooperation	Personal and Social Responsibility
Coordination	Intercultural competency
Empathy	Appreciation for diversity
Perspective Taking	Capacity for lifelong learning
Trust	Intellectual interest and curiosity
Service Orientation	
Conflict Resolution	
Negotiation	

Source: Pellegrino & Hilton (2015)

However, these interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, forms of dialogue, and reflections are challenged by synchronous learning (when two or more learners are connected simultaneously or in real-time using the same platform or communication channel, for instance, a video conference) and asynchronous learning (when learners access the same material at different times and locations, for instance, using e-learning websites at different points) during the pandemic (Finkelstein 2006). This is because students as human beings are isolated from the physical world's reality at the expense of the virtual. It paves the way for the learning processes to be dominated by the opinions of educators based on content (texts) rather than the 'self' (humanity).

Moreover, online teaching and learning are built from different pedagogical assumptions requiring different pedagogical strategies. The humanities are the branches of knowledge that concern human beings, their history, culture, language, literature, arts, and philosophy. The methodology often includes an analytical and critical method of inquiry. Unlike in the natural, biological and physical sciences, questions and answers in the humanities are mainly subjective. Often there is no one solution to a question, and multiple formulae may be needed to cover all possibilities holistically (Hoffman 2011: 10).

Dewey differentiated between schooling (teaching) and education

(learning). Education, he claimed, should be defined as "that reconstruction or reorganisation of experience [because of remote learning] which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience" (1998: 76). Although Dewey's paradigm seems to have fallen out of favour, at least as far as current educational policies are concerned (remote learning), his work remains fundamental in many education departments, especially in the domain of humanistic inquiry (Daniel 2020). His philosophy that children (learners), not content, should be the focus of the educational process has left a lasting impression on educators who share in his beliefs and philosophies about education and how children learn most effectively. Humanistic education is oriented to respecting human rights, expressing opinions, developing thinking, and acting per the noble values and humanitarian norms. Thus, the essence of education is a process of humanisation and humanising, which implies that education is the basis of the formation of human personality (Bozkurt & Sharma 2020).

However, according to Basilaia and Kvavadze (2020: 16),

> We … are in a period of transition, a moment when the modes and the technology for cultural reproduction are shifting, this time from print (offline) to electronic (online) environments, which opens new possibilities for freedom as well as oppression.

The study offers instructional paradigms in universities and the possibilities for academics to develop learning that is more flexible in the face of the pandemic and in light of the new experiences both within and outside schools, particularly in the domain of humanistic inquiry.

This paper is divided into three sections. Firstly, it discusses the humanities curriculum in the digital age in higher education. It provides a background for understanding the transformative stages of the humanities curriculum in teaching and learning and how the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a humanistic shift from offline selves to online personae. Secondly, it analyses the impact of learning online during the lockdown period on teaching and learning of practical-oriented disciplines in the humanities. Thirdly, it discusses the Zoom® platform as an online teaching tool, especially in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the humanities curriculum. The study concludes by drawing findings from the three sections to make recommendations for the humanities curriculum and

how students and higher education teachers can use it to cope in a post COVID-19 era in Africa.

2 Reducing the Distance in Social Distance: The Humanities Curriculum and Online Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic

According to Stenhouse (2015: 155), Humanities is the integrated study of history, literature, language, philosophy, music, theatre, the visual arts, and dance.

The humanities curriculum emphasises the development of critical thinking, creativity and the rights and responsibilities of the individual in society. It allows for interpersonal and intrapersonal learning. Students in the humanities explore aspects of human nature (physical, psychological, social, aesthetics and spiritual), human behaviour (examining ways individuals explore, think, and lead) and human ideals (the pursuit of truth, love, justice and beauty) (Stenhouse 2015). The humanities curriculum derives appropriate learning activities from human nature, behaviour and ideals. Although all learning activities are appropriate for teaching humanities, the most favourable activities require students to be active in the learning process: examining problems, appreciating and engaging in artistic endeavours, and confronting ethical and moral issues.

Most importantly, the humanities curriculum is characterised by its interdisciplinary focus, arts emphasis, cultural diversity and personal values. These combine to embody the teaching and learning processes in the curriculum, both in the assessment methods and learning outcomes (LOs). Table 2 presents both the assessment and learning outcomes of humanistic education.

Table 2: Assessment and learning outcomes of humanistic education

Appropriate forms of assessment in the humanities	Desired outcomes for students in the humanities
• Use of broad knowledge	• Use of and strong command of knowledge

• Use of knowledge and opinions contextually • Reasoned thinking and behaviour • Recognition and use of nuance • Recognition and appreciation of interrelationships among disciplines • Development and use of personal criteria for inter-relationships and criticism	• Use of knowledge to guide their behaviour • Communicate and be persuasive about their knowledge • Recognise enduring human problems • Use their knowledge to inform their involving system of values • Be culturally sensitive in their host nation • Use their knowledge to improve their lives and the lives of others

Source: Flinders & Thornton 2018

From the above, it becomes pertinent to ask: how can the humanities and its curriculum adapt to the era of the COVID-19 pandemic? How would the humanities ensure that its curriculum sustains its pedagogical approaches in view of the abrupt shift to virtual learning? How would the humanities develop new pedagogical approaches that would synergise its relationship with online learning and the prevailing odds that characterise it?

Studies such as those by Ali (2020), Bozkurt and Sharma (2020), Lowenthal *et al*. (2020), amongst others, demonstrate the overwhelming experiences of university academics and students in utilising the benefits of the online experience to reshape and re-organise their day-to-day activities. The constantly changing activities brought about by the pandemic have constrained the desire to move totally to online teaching, learning and interaction.

The traditional school system focuses heavily on teaching students the 'hard skills' (the measurable abilities such as course content tested by exams). Meanwhile, the 'soft skills' (the qualities and traits that help students develop as critical thinkers) are usually learned indirectly. However, online learning is

more content-oriented; hence, it disadvantages the value of negotiated learning, characteristic of humanistic approaches. Dewey's paradigm is a critique of online learning because it is based on the exchange of materials (texts and content) without paying attention to the holistic welfare of the students. The humanistic approach views human behaviour as motivated mainly by an innate drive towards growth that prompts the fulfilment of one's unique potential and to achieve an ideal condition known as self-actualization (Douglas 2015). For example, Chris Staley, a distinguished professor of art, and Heather McCune Bruhn, an assistant professor of art history at Pennsylvania State University, have been grappling with the shift of their hands-on art education after transitioning to online platforms. Staley was teaching a class that involved touching and shaping clay, and he explained that most students do not have access to clay or clay equipment at home. For Staley, the change raised many questions:

> "I had to ask myself, How can I make this a viable and meaningful experience?" Staley said. "How do you touch people's souls? When you are shaping the clay, you are shaping what you like and what you want to express. It was a challenge to try and create a new dynamic while making the class as meaningful as possible" (Penn State News, 2020).

Similar challenges may be faced in dance classes, art and project work that require intimate cooperation and collective synergies that are impaired by social distance when mediated through technology. Ali (2020) notes that success in online learning is determined by the extent to which the instructor and the institution can provide appropriate structures and the appropriate quantity and quality of dialogue between instructor and learner, considering the extent of the learner's autonomy. For this to occur, it must be noted that some of the students or learners, as the case may be, are already confronted with challenges such as financial constraints, internet connectivity, and lack of media-enabled appliances like android phones and laptops (Abubakar 2015). Therefore, the humanities must be humane in understanding the discrepancies underneath the students' experiences by ensuring that teachers develop flexible pedagogical approaches. The pedagogies, we argue, should encompass a structured system that respects institutional regulations and is considerate of students' needs. The humanities must endeavour to compensate

for online learning with compassion derived from a constant reminder of 'others' and not just the 'self'. The COVID-19 pandemic has already questioned man's sovereignty, and reducing the potential that this holds is to recollect the human essence in a digital divide quickly.

Support for the premise that instructors can lessen transactional distance by developing dialogue and structure that match learners' needs and abilities to be autonomous comes from Daniel (2020). According to him, instructors concluded that when learners receive guidance through a high degree of course structure and dialogue, there is a low level of transactional distance. However, the distance within social distance in the pandemic is reduced with the online experience because it offers another reasonable dimension that advantages the humanities. Broadly, such distance learning practices significantly reduce expenses related to transportation, lunch money and course materials. With recent taxi fare increases announced in South Africa and a 30% unemployment rate, there is a great need for a creative synergy of online learning with humanities pedagogy and curriculum structure. The questions that must be asked are: how do we maintain personal connections with vulnerable students in an era of lockdowns and social distancing, and how do we approach equity issues and prepare instruction for diverse learners on online platforms?

3   Learning Online in Lockdown: COVID-19 and the Humanities Curriculum

Synchronous and text-based asynchronous learning have emerged and are commonly used in online courses, especially in the context of lockdown in the COVID-19 pandemic (McBrien, Cheng & Jones 2009). However, it can be challenging to maintain student engagement in text-based discussions week after week; these discussions can get tedious and monotonous over time (Lane 2011). As noted by Dewey (1998), text based learning is content-driven, thus making it teacher-focused instead of student-centred. Learning online in lockdown isolates students' learning senses, like intuition, emotions, spontaneity, and concentration. Thus, this challenges the humanities' approach in learning as it relates to its assessment and learning outcomes.

The humanities approach to teaching and learning is centred around problem-based learning, reflection, dialogue, and engagement. Problem-based learning (PBL) starts learning with problems for students to solve, discuss,

and dissect. It is considered a professional preparation strategy that is multi-faceted and cross-disciplinary. With PBL, students learn concepts, theories, strategies, terms, and paradigms to assist them in finding solutions (Hoffman 2011).

We argue here that learning online and in the context of lockdown disrupts the contextual humanist approach to learning. Learning in the context of physical isolation removes the possibilities inherent in the humanistic approach to education. According to Freire, learners must understand their reality as part of their learning activity. However, lockdown makes it difficult to inter-relate with reality (Gerhardt 2000). For Freire, the individual must form himself rather than be formed (and online learning forms an individual within the strictures of virtual beings than human beings). Therefore, two valid points emerge from the argument on the imperative of learning online under lockdown conditions, paradoxical to the humanistic approach to learning. The first is that learning online enhances self-directed learning, thus encouraging individual reflection. However, learning online in the context of lockdown enhances self-directed learning but allows the learning process to be isolated in the context of text and content. Secondly, when COVID-19 abruptly shut down in-person teaching, there was a natural rush towards synchronous video. However, informed by the experience of teaching blended and online courses and prior research (Lowenthal *et al*. 2020), we argue that using asynchronous video could be a way for the humanities to maintain connection and engage-ment with students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students can actively participate in the asynchronous video discussions and appreciate the ability to see and hear their instructors and peers conveniently.

Engagement Theory calls for learners to be actively engaged in meaningful tasks for effective learning to occur. Dewey thought that effective education came primarily through social interactions and that the school setting should be considered a social institution (Flinders & Thornton 2018). He considered education a "process of living and not a preparation for future living" (Flinders & Thornton 2018:35; Gutek 2015). It requires all learning to have three significant characteristics: collaboration, a problem-based ap-proach, and authenticity. Dewey has been recognised as the father of progressive education for more than fifty years, advocating social learning (Slaughter 2009). Although his ideas have looked very different, they promote student engagement in classrooms through technology, especially in online learning and social distancing.

On the one hand, as noted by Slaughter (2009 :16), "our world today has become the electronic world"; technology is now the driver of the social lives of students, and its use is an effective way to promote student engagement, resulting in a passion for lifelong learning. On the other hand, teachers are responsible for providing a new level of relevant, effective, and socially engaging instruction for students (Flinders & Thornton 2018). Using tools such as cell phones, texting, instant messaging, chat rooms, and wikis, teachers can instruct students using the tools they are already comfortable with to effectively disperse information and academic content (Slaughter 2009). By designing instruction to meet the social needs of students through the use of appropriately aligned technology, Dewey's social learning theory is evident in these classrooms.

Therefore, Dewey's theory is eclectic in orientation, advocating a multi-disciplinary approach to optimise learning. It is also an appropriate theoretical foundation for the humanities, especially during lockdown and online teaching and learning. However, for meaningful engagement to occur, Chickering and Gamson (2007:17) provide seven principles based on good practice: It,

- encourages contact between students and faculty,
- develops reciprocity and cooperation among students,
- uses active learning techniques,
- gives students prompt feedback,
- emphasises time on task,
- communicates high expectations,
- respects diverse talents and ways of learning.

We suggest that modelling these principles onto online learning in the humanities makes for exemplary pedagogy.

Purely lecturing, in which the implicit assumption is that the students are empty vessels that need to be filled with knowledge, is inappropriate in the online setting. Much more can be gained from a highly interactive environment where students can exert some control over their learning and co-construct meaning within a collaborative framework. This portends a sustainable humanistic pedagogy combining both online and practical learning regulated by institutional frameworks and national guidelines.

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET 2020) has committed itself to support higher institutions, including the humanities, to go online. According to the task team report:

> As a department, we are engaging with all our universities and colleges on pursuing online learning modalities where possible, whilst also looking at the possibility of using readily available study guides for the trimester and semester programmes and a structured catch-up programme for the annual National Curriculum (Vocational) programmes (DHET 2020).

The task team's report also aims to ensure that the academic session of 2020 is completed online to avoid an entirely disrupted year. The impact is that there would be a loss of quality and trust between lecturers and students (Bach, Haynes & Smith 2016). According to Bach *et al.* (2016), the focus would be on fulfilling the academic calendar at the expense of humanities curriculum disciplines like drama, arts and culture, performance studies, teacher education, and other arts that require practical demonstrations as a teaching, learning and assessment process. The humanities must quickly reconsider its approach in view of the regulations to confront this challenge by integrating mixed methods and a blended approach of teaching and learning to meet the imperative. Platforms such as Zoom serve as mediated platforms to bridge the divide.

4 The Zoom Platform and its Impact on the Humanities Curriculum during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Higher Education

Zoom is a web-based video conferencing or media platform that allows users to meet online to collaborate on projects and share or annotate one another's screen (McBrien *et al*. 2009). The platform has played a mediated role in the COVID-19 pandemic as an online teaching and learning platform across higher education institutions in South Africa and elsewhere in the world. The humanities serve as a wonderful, fertile ground for developing online education because of the multiple venues to present content. For example, in a fine arts course, virtual tours of museums and other cultural venues assist students in learning about artistic forms and presentations. The staid, written

form of the traditional classroom can give way to audio clips played over Zoom. Speeches by Nelson Mandela, for example, when viewed in context, are much more graphic, imparting a sense of occasion and patriotic drama. Zoom can also serve as a medium of decolonisation. For example, students can appreciate body language, the nuances of pitch, rhythm and audience participation in oral folk tales, traditional songs and verse.

With Zoom, the written text, in this instance, transforms into verbal art. Other modes include audio lectures, videos, animation, simulations, music and sound clips, visual graphic presentations, and virtual tours.

As noted earlier, the humanities must take from the new experience brought about by COVID-19 that online learning can accelerate self-directed learning. Hence, new pedagogical approaches would require a sharp transition from surface to deep learning. Therefore, we suggest that the humanities use a conversational style combined with a rigorous academic approach. This conversational style will compensate for any feelings of remoteness and make online learning an exciting forum in which real people converse about mutually fascinating ideas. The initial challenge for classroom instructors is translating their teaching methods into an online environment. Lane (2011:19) observed, "Professional development thus takes on a different direction for online instructors". In addition to attending conferences and reading articles in their discipline, they must "attend" and "read" the web to become accustomed to their new classroom. This "serious play," the time spent exploring the web, trying out programs and websites, is done with teaching in mind. For example, collecting articles and blog posts in their discipline can create a convenient list of resources while also providing the experience of social bookmarking, which students could do as part of the class (Lane 2011). These approaches will reduce the distance in the social distance in humanistic studies and recreate a new culture for university academics by guaranteeing some sense of trust for learning to thrive in a post-COVID-19 era.

Therefore, for teaching and learning to take place effectively in a socially engaging atmosphere using Zoom and other online platforms during and post the COVID-19 pandemic, instructors and educators should adopt a blended teaching and learning approach. However, one crucial and reoccurring factor affecting the success of blended learning is students' sense of belonging to a community of learners. It can be addressed by involving and assigning students to mixed ability grouping/learning sets to work on online tasks, which may encourage peer learning due to the nature of ability grouping

(Su 2020). Additionally, academics need to be present in the learning journeys of students. This does not always need to be synchronous and may involve activities such as engagement with students' contribution to the online tasks and providing regular office hours either virtually via Zoom or in-person (if circumstances allow).

It is imperative to note that in designing and implementing a successful inclusive blended online learning that is useful for the humanities curriculum, the university needs to consider: support for students with LSP, the digital divide, student and staff digital literacy development, the nature of the degree subjects and level of learning, availability of the online learning resources, and a review of existing course assessments for online delivery (Mazuro & Rao 2020). Furthermore, suppose educators decide to adopt blended learning or complete online teaching for the new academic year post-COVID-19 era. In that case, course-level preparation may need to start earlier to adopt a more proactive rather than reactive pedagogical approach for a successful online experience, especially for the humanities curriculum.

So far, we have achieved three things. This paper discusses the COVID-19 pandemic and how it impacts the humanities curriculum. It further discusses the humanities curriculum and how the digital age and the COVID-19 pandemic redefined human activities, thus impacting the humanities curriculum. The impact of social distance and lockdown was also discussed in terms of how it impacts the humanities. A discussion followed on Zoom as a platform for online teaching and learning and its impact on this curriculum. Therefore, the chapter draws upon the discussions in the sections of this chapter to make three recommendations.

5   Recommendations

Firstly, university lecturers must serve as good facilitators: by encouraging discussion through empathy and careful listening, by showing expertise to stimulate rather than overwhelm students, by maintaining authority in the class over issues such as proper conduct and deadlines of submissions, and by being a socialising agent with connections to the broader academic community.

Secondly, with the massification of education, the pandemic might be the impetus to embrace the future boldly. The future of the traditional university, logistically, is in doubt. With the advance of modern technology,

educational institutions are changing how they teach and learn. Given the sheer numbers, increasing costs and scale, the modern university will most likely be an online university with a global reach, which would signify a paradigm shift away from élitism in education to genuine democratisation. The pandemic must be a bedrock to build affordable, quality online education for a global citizenry.

Finally, we flag the issue of cyber security, which has exposed the vulnerability of the Zoom application. End-to-end encryption is vital to ensure privacy and the integrity of online learning. Offensive imagery and slurs, known as Zoom bombing, have disrupted virtual classrooms, and the problem persists; it deserves attention.

6 Conclusion

The very nature of humanities studies demands social interaction, the sharing of ideas and collective interaction with people. The Zoom platform and other learning technologies allow lecturers to create rich experiences in their online classes and ameliorate the isolation inherent in remote learning.

The universities' willingness to provide tools and reduce the digital divide in South Africa attest to their view that online learning is about more than just technology; it is about offering support to those who teach and those who learn. This assistive mindset is critical to our short and long-term recovery from the pandemic's adverse effects. The essence of online learning should be focused on providing flexibility and accessibility to all within higher education institutions, enabling students to reach greater heights and not be limited by a predetermined set of circumstances.

This global pandemic has taught us that the importance of online flexibility is critical for the sustainment of education and our overall well-being. We should all take this time to assess the disciplines in the humanities and look for innovative and strategic methods to advance deep learning and re-purpose the curriculum to synchronise with the possibilities of online technology. Opening our minds while our doors remain closed will provide deeper, immersive learning opportunities as we embrace the future. Finally, teachers, researchers, and theorists must reconsider their foundational understanding of what counts as pedagogy in the humanities in the light of the affordances of the virtual classroom and the pandemic.

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What does it Mean to Teach in the Shadow of COVID-19? A Critical Reflective Essay on the Future of Online Teaching in South African Universities

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Abstract

The pandemic-enforced lockdown has completely upended our understanding of what it means to teach when the lives of academic teachers and students are at stake. That shift in understanding is much more than the technical transition from face-to-face teaching to remote or online teaching. What the invisible Coronavirus has done is to make more visible the intellectual, emotional, political, remedial, and spiritual dimensions of higher teaching that seek (or rather, *should* seek) much more than the exchange of information for testing purposes and include the human connections that give meaning to education itself. The situation calls for a re-imagination of what it means to teach during a lockdown, especially in a post-COVID world that tries to recapture vital human connections across a gaping inequality and digital divide.

Keywords: digital inequality, technological innovation, online teaching, pandemic lockdown, teaching, higher education

1 Introduction

The global pandemic caused by the novel Coronavirus has up-ended our social, medical, and educational worlds. Highly infectious and deadly, schools and universities have struggled to find ways of responding that mitigate risk of illness and death among students, teachers, and staff. It is not surprising that worldwide, the most emotional and political of the debates around the re-

opening of society concerned education: the lives of children and young adults are at stake.

How and when we should re-open education facilities is a difficult question precisely because the incoming evidence is still unclear, the sample sizes of initial studies too small, the geographies of investigation too limited, and the big social science questions still unanswered (Jansen 2020b). Are children vectors for the disease? Are the costs of keeping children at home (social isolation, hunger, learning loss) greater than the risks of sending them to school? How reasonable is it to ask university students to maintain social distancing when authorities know it is difficult, if not impossible, to impose such restrictions on crowded campuses?

One response to these complex questions has been the introduction of remote online learning. If young people can learn at a distance from their educational institutions, connected via one of the many 'platform pedagogies' available (Le Grange 2020), then the critical concerns about infection, illness and death are easily resolved. If only it were that simple ....

What I want to reflect on in this essay is a question lost in the rush towards some technological resolution of the global threat to public health and education: what does it mean to teach and learn under pandemic conditions?

2 What the Pandemic suggests about the future of Education: Seven Theses

Based on emerging research and reflection in this COVID period, I wish to present seven theses regarding the future direction of higher education in a post-pandemic world, with a particular focus on South African universities. These theses emerge from my team-based research on the impacts of COVID on school education and academic work, my continuing role as an academic teacher before and during the lockdown, and my experiences as a former university vice-chancellor and advisor to funding organisations which invested in online learning in higher education in the 2020 academic year.

#1: That the single most important consequence of this extended, pandemic-enforced lockdown is the exacerbation of inequalities in the education system, with educational outcomes that will be felt for generations to come

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It is already clear that the most important consequence of the extended, pandemic-enforced lockdown will be the exacerbation of inequalities in the education system and that unequal education outcomes will be felt for generations to come (see Czerniewicz *et al.* 2020). Prior to the pandemic, universities were already massively unequal in terms of their resource capacities. Then came COVID-19, and any policy veneer of 'a single system of higher education' was shattered as historically disadvantaged institutions scrambled to continue some form of education from a distance. The sheer scale of these inequalities for South Africa's public universities is captured in a 2020 ICT Survey Report of the Association of South African University Directors of Information Technology, in relation to things like readiness for online teaching, the state of learning management systems, existing collaboration platforms, and remote data connectivity (AUSAUDIT 2020).

Major funders were more likely to support 'shovel ready' institutions to scale up existing online learning infrastructures rather than those build such physical and electronic capacities from scratch; in short, the rich got richer and the poor fell further behind.

As the shock of the pandemic was being absorbed by institutions of higher learning, it quickly became evident that a massive mistake was made in the investment strategy of the government's Department of Higher Education and Training. In the past five years alone, a staggering amount of R11,051,908b was spent on residential infrastructure on university campuses (DHET 2020). There was good reason for this, as students demands on universities extended from tuition fees and academic support to accommodation for the growing number of poor students registered at the 26 public universities and the 50 TVET colleges spread across 364 campuses in the nine provinces of South Africa. As universities closed under the pandemic lockdown, those new residences stood out as white elephants on campuses that could not even be accessed by external parties, as in vacation periods, to generate revenue for cash-strapped universities.

Of course, this failure of this investment strategy could not have been anticipated, but imagine what could have happened if at least part of those governmental funds was spent on building technological infrastructures for online learning. It turns out that the more élite public universities did exactly that both as a matter of course, like the University of Cape Town with its impressive MOOCs programmes, but also as a matter of necessity in the wake of the historic student protests of 2015-16. When increasingly violent protests

disrupted teaching and learning, destroyed campus properties, and threatened the lives of staff and students, most universities shut down for months on end.

What is less known from that period is that those institutions which could afford to do so, made massive investments in online education so that teaching and learning could continue relatively smoothly for students registered in those institutions. From a student activist position, this move might have been seen as cynical by institutions that did not want to deal with the difficult issues being raised on fully active campuses. From a university administrator's position, such decisions allowed for the academic year to continue without disrupting the time-to-degree for students. The reality is that capacity to move online was neatly split between the historically white and black universities.

It is not surprising, therefore, that when the pandemic shut down universities, the élite institutions could switch-off face-to-face teaching and move relatively smoothly to fully online, synchronous teaching. The historically black universities were struggling with setting up emergency remote teaching and learning, and trying to distribute data to their students especially in far-flung, rural areas. The élite universities had the status or calling capacity to obtain zero-rating concessions from cellphone companies for their students, and could provide laptops to those without devices to take home with them.

Our national research on the impact of the pandemic lockdown on the academic work of women scholars shows, in sometimes heart-rending terms, the impacts of such inequalities of infrastructure on teaching and learning. Women academics worked late into the night for reasons that included the panic and demands from students, especially in the poorer universities. Some academics bought data for their students. Others worked into the early hours of the morning because students could access cheaper data after hours. Many students from poorer institutions struggled with the demands of the new technologies that were less familiar to them than to middle class students in the élite universities (Walters *et al.* 2020).

In response, our data shows, academics came under pressure from their institutions to 'leave no student behind'. If one sets aside for the moment the explicit borrowing of a policy mantra from an era of conservative politics in the USA, under the administration of George W Bush, the idea nevertheless remains to ensure that students were not academically disadvantaged by this once-in-a-century, global pandemic. That is fair, but the consequences of such

an institutional expectation when continued teaching was disrupted more than 5 months in the less endowed universities, is that academic outcomes can be even more unequal in the years to come.

#2 That the shift towards more intensive online education environments is now inevitable, and will become the norm across universities as the key component of national higher education systems

Whether we like it or not, the traditional university fashioned on the long dominant model of face-to-face teaching is a thing of the past. Emerging economies around the globe are rushing to figure out how to adjust their education systems to this new reality (Pham & Ho 2020). Of course, there will always be direct, contact teaching but it will no longer be the dominant mode for the transmission of new knowledge. There are two reasons for this. One, there is a stark warning being repeated by epidemiologists that pandemics will continue to be part of our lives as human populations. In this sense, our interconnected world has changed the future contours of our togetherness. Even as South Africa opened up gingerly through the different levels, experts talk about learning to live with the virus, and indeed other pathogens, as they emerge. Even the novel Coronavirus will not 'disappear magically' as one careless world leader likes to put it, but may remain with us in various mutant forms for years to come, just as the less infectious influenza virus never really went away following the so-called Spanish Flu of 1918.

It is, however, not only the virus that compels such shifts in the modalities of teaching and learning but also the routinization of violence on South African campuses. When it is not the élite universities like UCT and Wits, the media seldom registers the routines of disruptive violence on campuses such as at the universities of technology (UoTs), in part because these institutions are afforded lesser status in the public mind. It will become more and more critical to the future of these 6 UoTs, as they are called, to be able to switch seamlessly to online learning when violence interrupts the academic programme.

#3 That the ability to switch-on and switch-off online learning in a blended model of education is what will distinguish

successful and less successful universities in a post- COVID-19 world

There is little indication that the historically disadvantaged universities in South Africa have the leadership or the vision to make a decisive shift towards online learning as a primary feature of their instructional platforms. The tradition of face-to-face teaching is well-established at these institutions and their pressing priorities are simply to stay afloat financially and respond to the basic material needs of their students. It would require a massive mind shift for leaders whose priorities are institutional survival, not institutional revisioning towards a new world of teaching and learning.

With brand new residences in place, there is no government funding for a completely different kind of infrastructure that transforms these institutions into medium or high-tech facilities for teaching and learning. There is also very little private sector interest in providing that level of investment for these disadvantaged universities, and there is no base of alumni on which to draw for such a technological revisioning of poorer universities. One remote (sic) possibility is turning those residences into high-tech centres so that when future lockdowns happen, students could learn from their dormitories. The problem in the historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) is that there are too many students to enable such accommodation while using the norms of social distancing. The problem for university authorities is that in the case of routine protests and especially violent protests, the students are still on campus.

Regardless of these institutional contusions, the universities that do emerge strongly from this pandemic are those that significantly increase their capacities for fully online learning as part of a completely new vision for higher education.

#4: The precise form of newly configured higher education systems will within and across national contexts depending on the imagination of university leaders, the resources available to them, and student demands and expectations

In their thought-provoking new book, *The low density University*, Kim & Malloney (2020) offer fifteen different scenarios for the future of higher education, including students in residence learning virtually, block plan enrolments, low-residency options and going fully remote. It is unclear what

path the élite universities will follow, but there are some important considerations that might well shape those decisions.

The current business model of 30,000 or more students on campus every day, is clearly not sustainable. The old arguments from government, that South Africa already has 'a single dedicated higher education institution' (that is, the University of South Africa or UNISA), is a pre-pandemic defensive posture that no longer holds water in a digital world that will transform modes of teaching and learning in *all* universities. In any event, it is now clear that UNISA is coming apart at the seams because of massive over-enrollment without the administrative capacity to handle those student numbers and, crucially, without the digital innovation that should have marked this large monstrosity as a distinctive feature of the higher education system.

Smart universities will recognize that a growing component of their delivery model for higher education will require offering fully online learning to more and more students. The UCT MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) initiative is an example of how to generate significant revenues for particular student markets while maintaining a small, vital undergraduate programme in a research-intensive university. The élite institutions will, however, come under pressure for expanding online education to the residential programmes.

However, in South Africa as in other countries, undergraduate education for students is not simply about accessing knowledge: it is about enjoying the experience of residential life and learning as one of the attractions of 'going to university' in the first place. There is therefore a cultural expectation that comes with the undergraduate education experience that goes far beyond the formal curriculum arrangements in different fields of study. This partly explains the inability of authorities to control and contain under-graduate student behaviour when universities started to re-open in places like the USA; to lockdown in a room, to maintain social distancing, and to define the experience as one of 'going to classes' is completely at odds, especially with what undergraduate students believe 'going to university' is about.

It is about breaking free from the constraints of high school, participating in initiation rites (completely stamping out this undesirable behaviour is a failed cause), connecting socially with friends and strangers, and simply having a good time. Making precise epidemiological arguments about the etiology of COVID-19 simply demonstrates how studies of human behave-our (the social sciences and humanities) fell critically behind the necessary research on the biomedical and health aspects of the disease (Jansen 2020b).

Clearly, universities have options to design the higher education experience in ways that take account of both the socio-cultural expectations of undergraduate students as well as the academic pursuits that come with studies towards a degree especially when lockdowns threaten. Such options could include an intensive first-year experience, block teaching which alternates contact teaching and online learning, and a reduced academic calendar year (Kim & Malloney 2020).

#5 Smart universities will have to devise ways in which to overcome the inherent limitations that digital education imposes on our understandings of what it means to teach

I am no Luddite. In fact, I love the high-level functions of the different online platforms for teaching and conferencing in real time. But screen teaching does not work for those of us who believe that this profound act is much more than the instructional delivery of important information. Teaching is indeed more complex and more fascinating than handing out 'notes' in preparation for the coming examinations. With the pandemic lockdown, I became more conscious of what I was in fact doing in the course of teaching education policy to aspirant teachers.

For me, teaching is, in the first instance, *an intellectual activity*. I give no 'notes' and as my Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) group just discovered, if you are not in the class, you cannot pass the course. It is in the process of a rich exchange of ideas between the professor and the students, that knowledge is created, debated, shared, and evaluated. It is an intellectual engagement that challenges a student's most cherished ideas about the school curriculum: spoiler alert - the school curriculum is not always about children. Screen teaching in an intense, fast-moving 50-minute lecture where half the students have switched off their videos (for better connectivity), diminishes teaching as an intellectual pursuit.

Teaching is *a profoundly emotional activity*. Faced with a few hundred students, I rely on all my senses when I teach. I not only see but hear, feel, and touch as I move around the lecture room. As I lead a discussion of government policy on corporal punishment, I notice a student whose eyes start to tear up. It is quite possible that he is recalling a harsh experience with *lyfstraf*. This is a cue for me to soften the tone, to slow down the pace, and as I walk past the young man, to place a brief, reassuring hand on his shoulder. With screen

teaching, I cannot see or hear or touch, especially when the pre-class instructtion is to 'mute' (what an unfortunate word) yourself.

Whether a teacher realizes it or not, teaching is an inescapably *political activity*. You either teach to confirm students' prejudices or you unsettle their taken-for-granted assumptions about school and society. For example, our new book, *Who gets in and why* (Jansen & Kriger 2020), is an account of the politics of admissions in the élite schools of the southern suburbs. I ask the students, 'What explains white flight when black enrolments reach a tipping point?' My teaching requires active participation and so I can see the discomfort of some white students. A few of the responses are awkward and rattle the rest of the class: '…maybe the black students are too noisy or disruptive?' I need to settle the class as I feel on my skin the ripples of discontent flowing across the auditorium in the form of murmurs. At least the student is honest and that is a starting point for a discussion on racism. Shut down the comment, and there is little chance for teaching social justice. Ignore the murmurs, and the racial insult sticks. Keeping both sides in a difficult conversation on race and admissions requires that I see, hear and feel the class. Behind a screen, such teachable moments cannot be grasped.

Teaching is a *remedial* activity, given our unequal and divided past. All students are disadvantaged by a rote-learning, examination-driven, inquiry-starved school system. A nod, a frown, and eager hands shooting up all over the place are vital behavioral cues about who 'gets it' on a slippery concept like a 'theory of action' in policy analysis, and who does not. With my eyes on all students in a 360-degree view of the class, I can make instant decisions such as redirecting, reinforcing and reconnecting learning based on what is visible to the academic teacher. It is a complex act, teaching, for if I move too fast, I lose some students, but if I move to slow, you can sense the boredom. A screen does not give me those vital data points in real time to (re)adjust my teaching.

And finally, teaching is a *spiritual activity*. Students (sure, not all of them) come to class to connect, to be inspired, to be heard, and to sense hope. Teaching is intended to bring out the best in students, to point to something beyond themselves. Now imagine a gallery of muted students on your screen and try to inspire those dark blocks from a little room in your attic.

#6 That the feverish excitement about the digital transformation of universities will mean little to the HDIs unless the problems of digital inequality are resolved

Most students, whether in school or university, will not benefit from the migration towards online learning in the minority of élite institutions inside developing economies. The tech-evangelists would have us believe that there is a brave new world ahead of us, but this means little in for majorities left behind in schools (Jansen 2020a) and universities (Czerniewich *et al.* 2020). The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Pretoria is correct in his assessment:

> Most universities do not have the human and financial capacity to respond to these changes given that they have not been adequately funded for decades. Many face an existential crisis if governments do not include them in the stimulus packages meant to reverse the impact of COVID-19 (Habib, Phakeng & Kupe 2020).

What is the future of South African universities on the wrong side of the digital divide? There are two scenarios likely to unfold. One possibility is that the government and private sector works together to make massive investments in building the technological infrastructures of the lower half of the university system; it was a point made repeatedly by the former Vice-Chancellor of Wits University, Professor Adam Habib.

Government cannot do this alone given the state of the economy and the significant redirection of public funds towards 'free higher education' for student majorities in the historically black universities. The private sector will not make this scale of investments on their own outside of a public private partnership for the simple reason that the returns, whether social or financial, are likely to be unattractive in institutions that are chronically unstable. This is, therefore, the unlikely scenario.

A much more likely scenario is that the digital divide increases with the historically black universities stuck in the world of contact teaching and routinely closing and opening because of pandemics and protests; at the same time, the élite universities streak ahead with the innovations, reach and efficiencies afforded through continued investments in, and expansions of, online teaching and learning. The historically black universities are already in a state of inertia, some would even say, moribund, as far as innovations in

teaching and quality in research are concerned. The failure to connect (sic) to the digital transformations on campuses will place them even further behind in delivering on their primary mandate, which is undergraduate teaching.

This does not mean that registrations and graduations cease. It simply means that the ordinary functions of universities will be maintained at a basic level of operations while these institutions sit out the new waves of techno-logical innovation. Once again, calls will be made for a bold policy interven-tion that installs differentiation in policy between teaching colleges (the current set of HDIs) and research-based universities, even though differentiation in practice is already a reality. Once more, the political reaction will be fierce with arguments that such decisions would be racist given the institutions being targeted; government ministers will back down swiftly even as higher education differentiates itself.

#7 That 'the next big thing' in online learning would be the development of technological innovations that enable effective teaching in fields like the clinical sciences and professions such as teaching

As the lockdown eased in South Africa, some students were allowed to go back to university, such as those who work in laboratories and, even earlier, medical students. The reason, of course, is that we do not as yet have innovations that enable us to do the teaching practicum - as one example - from a distance. And yet, this should not be difficult. It requires in the first place a mind shift that deals with the reality that in a lockdown, schools close down for children at more or less the same time as universities close down for students. Such a shift has other positive elements such as being able to teach from a distance in ways that reach children in deep rural areas and not simply the ones in urban centres, where most universities are located and where most students prefer to do their practical teaching.

With or without lockdown, it is an important next step in technological innovation to imagine and realize the teaching practicum as simply another step in the development of high-tech responses to teaching. It will, of course, require students in one facility adequately equipped with a combination of reflective mirrors and microphones, to enable the online device(s) to capture a whole 'classroom'. It will also require a third-person viewer capacity for the assessor to be able to observe both the student teacher teaching and how the

class responds. A life sciences teacher doing a dissection in class or a chemistry teacher showing students how to perform a simple titration requires moving cameras for wide-angle observations by the teacher education specialist. The parallels in the clinical sciences or the artistic fields would, of course, have their own inventions through newer and smarter technologies.

3   Conclusion

COVID-19 has been devastating for public health; upwards of one million humans are officially recorded to have died as a result of the disease by the end of September 2020. And yet the pandemic has had one major upside: it has forced higher education institutions to completely rethink what it means to teach in a changing world. It is certainly not hyperbole to hear a world thinker make the point that:

> Just as the First Industrial Revolution forged today's system of education, we can expect a different kind of educational model to emerge from COVID-19 (Kandri 2020).

In consequence, the very idea of teaching is at stake.

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The Dark Side of Online Teaching and Learning in South African Universities

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Abstract

This chapter philosophically explores the dark side of online teaching and learning in universities in South Africa. Unlike the myriad of studies conducted that look into technologically-driven pedagogical innovative supporting strategies in a face-to-face classroom setting, this chapter looks at technology from the following two angles: (i) how technology might efface and obscure effective teaching and learning, leading to what we refer to as dark teaching and learning, and (ii) how the shift to online learning is not only the forging of a new world for teaching and learning but also nurturing in students a new cultural imprint of being and acting in accordance with considerations that favour global capitalist demands of being and acting. To this end, the chapter draws on Heidegger's work on technology and reviews the literature of teaching and learning in a fully online teaching space, to illustrate this darker side of online teaching and learning. This chapter does not argue for the termination of a fully online mode of teaching and learning, but offers some positive recommendations that could lead to more effective teaching and learning in a completely virtual space.

Keywords: university, enframing, learning, technology, behaviourism, constructivism

Karen J. Koopman & Oscar Koopman

1 Introduction

In an attempt to guide universities in South Africa through unchartered territory during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Minister heading the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), Blade Nzimande, elucidated the DHET position that no student should be left behind. This position implies that every institution of higher education must use all means necessary to ensure that all students are reached. The Minister pointed out that to achieve this, all institutions need to adopt a 'multimodal remote system' to teaching and learning. This means that in areas where students can access the internet, online teaching and learning through various internet-based learning management systems and social media platforms should take place. Universities responded to the Minister's call by putting measures in place to provide laptops, zero-rated data for the use of institutional learning management systems (online learning platforms), and free data to all state-funded students, while those falling outside of this group (bursary recipients and self-funded students) are to provide their own devices and data. Furthermore, the small percentage of students who reside in areas with no access to the internet, and therefore cannot connect to the internet, must be provided with hand-delivered learning materials in various forms, such as USBs, surface mail or email to third parties who can reach these students. To assist students with no or poor internet connectivity, in line with the Minister's suggestion, churches, community halls and libraries should be set up as new learning spaces for students to connect online for classes. This frenzied activity behind the scenes is intended, for the moment, to ensure social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic – but also that all universities will ultimately go online entirely, offering no face-to-face teaching and learning opportunities.

We can surmise that this shift from a physical space to a completely virtual or online world entails a shift to a whole new world of teaching and learning for many lecturers and students. This new online world of virtual reality, or cyberspace, impelled by COVID-19, has been forcibly implemented despite fierce resistance from students throughout the country due to the huge economic inequalities that produced the immense digital divide.

Over the last two decades, there have been a myriad of conceptual and empirical studies both locally and abroad on the usefulness, effectiveness, challenges and implementation of ICTs (Webb 2011), various social media platforms such as Facebook (Meintjies & Van Wyk 2020), Blogs (Waghid 2019), and WhatsApp (Froment, Garcia-Gonzalez & Bohorquez 2017). The

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aforementioned studies investigated the use of technological tools from a blended classroom environment and not from a fully online approach. Although these studies are valuable and add to the rich repository of knowledge, this conceptual chapter looks beyond the use of online internet-based technological tools and social media platforms as a pedagogical strategy to support learning: its main focus is to explore the philosophy behind the shift to technologically-driven innovations in pedagogy and the impact thereof on teaching and learning.

To this end, this chapter has a five-fold purpose. In what follows, we first explain what we mean by 'dark teaching and learning' in universities. Secondly, we draw on Heidegger's views on technology to explain the philosophy behind technology and how it (technology) can be used to forge a new world with new mindsets, behaviours and actions. Thirdly, we provide a brief description of how a new virtual world created by technology can forge new spaces for teaching and learning. This is done to show how the online or virtual world can be used to promote specific kinds of actions and thinking. Fourthly, we provide a brief description of what happens inside a learning management system and its impact on student learning and thinking. Fifthly, drawing on Michel Foucault's notion of biopower, we state our views on how the digital university with its technological capabilities is more interested in promoting specific actions and behaviours as a form of cognitive capitalism expressed as biopower, to gain more control over the human body. Hence, the vision of universities is to become engine rooms and innovative hothouses of global capitalism, instead of guiding students to develop a better understanding of the self in the world. Finally, we offer some recommendations that could lead to more effective teaching and learning in a fully online space.

1.1 The Dark Side of South African Universities

More than two decades into its democracy, it has become a widely accepted practice to still describe South Africa as one of the most unequal societies in the world. Webster (2017) reports that the top 10% of the population earn about 60% of all the income. In addition, they also own 95% of all the countries assets. Compared to more advanced economies where the top 10% earn 20-35% of all the income, this is much higher. In 2015, the Gini coefficient for income stood at 0.66. Comparing this level of inequality to the Gini coefficient in 1994 before the shift to post-apartheid South Africa, nothing has changed,

as the Gini-coefficient also stood at 0.66 then. The Gini coefficient reflects the levels of inequality on a scale of 0 to 1, where 0 represents absolute equality and 1 absolute inequality. According to a living conditions survey (Statistics South Africa 2014/15) 49,2% (35.1 million) of adults 18 years and older, continue to live below the upper-bound poverty line. Furthermore, although most of these households have access to electricity, many of them still do not have running water, sanitation and refuse removal services.

Koopman and Koopman (2020) report that under apartheid, the 15 public universities and 21 public technikons, were all situated within a gigantic bimodal distribution. They (2020: 156) write:

> The term 'bimodal' refer to a higher education system designed for the minority white student population and a separate system designed for the black masses in the country.

Furthermore, they argue that these 36 public institutions were strictly divided along racial lines
as they were classified as 'whites only' and 'blacks only' institutions. Among the 15 public universities, the 'whites only' institutions were labelled as prestigious universities as they were well resourced, while the 'black universities' were labelled as insignificant. This is because, under apartheid, the role of 'black universities' in the national project of socio-economic development was minimised. Consequently, these 'black' institutions experienced many economic challenges and failures, coupled with stagnation and regression (Assie-Lumumba 2006).

Today, twenty-six years into democracy, despite these historically disadvantaged universities: (i) receiving massive monetary support from government and international organisations; (ii) undergoing infrastructural upgrading and becoming well resourced; (iii) appointing well-qualified staff; (iv) offering internationally benchmarked qualifications; and (v) producing quality research and researchers, not much has changed, as the majority of the students we teach still reside in the poverty-stricken historically disadvantaged areas. These areas are plagued with insurmountable social ills caused by high unemployment rates which are the leading cause of severe financial hardships, poverty, erosion of the family and crime, amongst many other factors. To substantiate this point, one day, one of my (second author) quiet, hardworking male students entered my lecture room 20 minutes late. After the lecture, I

asked him, showing no empathy: 'Why were you so late?' After a long pause, he responded: 'I had to wait for my mom for taxifare, but she took so long I decided to walk to campus because I did not want to miss my classes'. 'How far from campus do you stay?' I asked, to which he responded, 'About 10 kilometres'. Although such events and stories constantly echo in our minds, compelling us to analyse them as we search for solutions to such problems to the benefit of the student, they slowly dissipate as we become overwhelmed by our own challenges. Despite the lion's share of departmental budgets going towards student support for teaching and learning, it becomes insufficient as soon as it falls inside the grey zone. This story illustrates how many students could fall off the radar as their personal issues interfere with their studies and how that weighs them down.

1.2 The Darker Side of Teaching and Learning

As academics, we are acutely aware of the social ills plaguing our students, but most of the time, when we plan and deliver our lectures, we do not take these social challenges into account. This is because we often have to rush through our content, leaving little space for student discussions and critical reflections on the content due to a tightly packed curriculum with limited timelines. From many conversations with our colleagues, it does seem that they struggle with similar issues most of the time where little deep academic engagement takes place in their classes. One colleague, when asked how much time he allocates for discussions in his lectures, laughingly said, 'You are joking, right, I simply do not have the time for discussions… not even sure I'll finish my work'. In other words, instead of placing the student at the centre of the planning, design and delivery of lectures, the focus is mainly on curriculum delivery with little regard for the lived realities of the students. This happens, Waghid reminds us, because academics are constantly reminded that 'the university cannot survive if throughput rates are not met' (2012: 74). The focus on throughput rates has a direct bearing on how academics approach their lectures. When academics focus on throughput rates, Koopman (2017) notes, the classroom becomes a space for technical compliance that aims to promote the essentialisation of commodified knowledge without the freedom for critique. Hopmann refers to this kind of pedagogical approach as 'restraint teaching' (2007: 112). With the focus on success and throughput rates, academics lose their autonomy to teach freely whatever they wish without conferring with anyone and allowing

themselves to be guided by truth and student needs. This is the kind of darkness that dominates not only our classrooms but also those of our colleagues, especially those that have large classes of 300+ students, that place a heavy administrative burden on lecturers. According to Hoppman (2007), a pedagogy of restraint does not allow the student the freedom to explore things on his own, nor does the lecturer provide proper guidance to lead the student progressively and coherently to new insights or understandings. This is because the focus of teaching is primarily on letting students know the work rather than understanding the work.

Dark teaching can directly result in dark learning (Bengsten & Barnett 2018). This happens as academics are restrained by so much attention given to tests and examinations, that results in students memorising and regurgitating factual information (Koopman 2018). In the process, dark teaching limits a student's learning experiences. Bengsten & Barnett (2018) takes this a step further and point out that such dark teaching is constitutive of the unbridled nature of learning, which represents a loss of control by which student-centred learning should take place. Waghid describes the students in such a dark space as becoming 'technicians of knowledge' (2012: 74). In other words, students are trained to master facts to perform specific functions. We often see the consequences of training students as technicians of knowledge when we visit schools to evaluate their practice as future teachers. Most of them present their learners with factual information without making it relevant to their lived world experiences, nor do they illustrate the real-life applications of the conceptual knowledge they deliver. Although numerous studies have been conducted that provide insight into which teaching methods are most effective in the university classroom setting, dark teaching continues to be visible, which at times is beyond the control of lecturers.

The unexpected emergency of COVID-19, where lecturers across the country expectedly had to shift from an in-person mode of instruction to an online web-based approach, could create even darker spots within the already existing dark teaching. Dreyfus writes:

> [We] should remain open to the possibility that, when we enter cyberspace and *leave behind our emotional, intuitive, situated, vulnerable, embodied selves*…, we might, at the same time, necessarily lose some of our crucial capacities: our ability to make sense of things so as to distinguish the relevant from the irrelevant,

our sense of the seriousness of success and failure that is necessary for learning ... (2008: 6-7; emphasis added).

Apart from the fact that a shift to online teaching and learning dismisses the body's capacity to see the lecturer or student in action in the classroom, the situation becomes worse if teachers or students were not adequately trained to function in a fully online world of cyberspace. Drawing from our own experiences in the faculties of education where we work, most of the staff were not adequately trained to teach in a fully online environment that uses server software or social media platforms. The focus of the training we (and our colleagues) received, was on how to use technology as a supporting teaching tool. What exacerbates the situation even more, is that the majority of the students do not have mobile devices, internet access and data to do so. For example, at the institution where the second author works, close to 3000 students applied for laptops and data, and less than 10% received them. Students were also provided with limited data that made it even more difficult to connect via learning management systems for synchronous teaching. For example, one of the first author's students wrote in a WhatsApp message: 'We are six siblings with two smartphones to share amongst us. So, we will have to plan who gets the phone to connect for our respective lectures'. When the second author asked one of his third-year Chemistry students when she would submit her assignment, she said, 'My laptop broke, and I now have to borrow from one of my peers to do it'. These are some of the challenges that might directly impact on the quality of teaching and learning during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Next, we explore the philosophy behind technology by drawing on the scholarly work of Martin Heidegger to reveal the concealed world of technology. We are specifically interested in the impact of technology on student thinking and being.

2 Heidegger's Philosophy on Technology and Anticipation of the Technological Age

In Martin Heidegger's magnus opus, *Being and Time* (1967), the essence of human existence is perceived in terms of his notion of *Dasein*. Heidegger uses this term *Dasein* to mean an 'idiosyncratic interlocutor'; it is translated from the German as '*Sein*' (being) and '*Da*' (there/here). The focus of our existence

is therefore not so much on how people think or what they believe in, but on how they act and cope in the world within a particular context (*Da* - there/here). It is in the process of 'being' or 'acting' in the world that a person's thoughts are made explicit. For full details on the different modes of *Dasein*, see Heidegger (1967), Dreyfus (2006), and Koopman & Koopman (2018), amongst others. In his later works, Heidegger's (1977) philosophy shifted to focus on the field of 'technology' as a mode of *existence* without any reference to '*Dasein'*. He explored the notion of technology in his post-World War II essays on technology as follows:

> … this context is historicised so that any particular intentional arc or relationship between human existence and the world is always already circumscribed by a historical framework such as the technological one. Thus, for any set of norms or worlds to be revealed, other norms or worlds must be concealed. These norms vary, but the revealing-concealing structure of being itself within which these variable norms occur is invariable. The enframing is one such variant upon this overall invariant structure of being and as such it necessarily conceals other variants (Heidegger 1977: 2).

This citation by Heidegger paints a portrait of how technology as a field could lead to the creation and establishment of a new world where new ways of thinking will lead to new ways of being. In other words, technology as a source will be crafting new ways of being that will repress or what he calls 'conceal' existing ways of thinking and acting in the world. This means, as Waddington (2005) point out, the revealing and concealing structure of being in the technological epoch depends on people's understanding of the significance of technology in their lives.

Although Heidegger does not conceive of technology as a tool or device, his focus in his essay *The Question Concerning Technology*, is primarily about the philosophy driving technology. Thus, existence in a digital or technological epoch should be viewed from the perspective of particular behaviours and actions in the world that subscribes to technology. To explain these ways of being, he coined the phrase *das Ge-stell*, which in translation means *enframing* (Belu 2017). According to Heidegger, enframing denotes a cultural imprint or a mode of revealing a specific attitude of modern civilisations. More specifically, enframing is a representation mainly of how

people will treat each other and nature primarily as a resource. Although Heidegger's depiction of technology could not point to the particular technologies or the various technological devices we see and know today, it is more about what this attitude discloses or conceals in the modern world. He lucidly describes what he means by the impact of technology on a person's thinking and attitude, when he writes how the individual will be reduced to objects or things:

> … humans will be viewed … as a heap of fungible raw materials, resources, or standing reserve (*Bestand*) awaiting optimisation (Belu 2017: 3).

Heidegger predicted that the final goal of all human behaviour and action is predicated on the idea of pushing maximum profit at minimum expense, while at the same time gaining control of human behaviour and optimising them as resources.

Over the last two decades, we have witnessed how students in our classrooms are viewed as raw materials in need of crafting for a market-driven knowledge economy within global capitalism. This neo-liberal agenda has infiltrated every sphere of the university, which revolves around the commodification of knowledge and relegates mathematics and science to a level above lived human experience (Koopman & Koopman 2018). This (neo-liberal) agenda is visible and witnessed by students and academics during the current COVID-19 pandemic, where the completion of the academic year takes precedence over human lives and safety (DHET 2020). While the government is fully aware of the major economic inequalities and the huge digital divide, their focus is on using every means possible to complete the curriculum. The nurturing of the student as a resource is also evident in university curricula that continue to advance and promote the practices and demands associated with neo-liberalism. Key among these demands is the focus on 'higher-level skills' (human capital) and 'problem-solving' research (intellectual capital) (DHET 1997 2013), which are all directly linked to the objectives of a specific economic strategy (DHET 2012). In 2008, the World Bank linked growth and development in Africa to the quality of its university graduates. Thus, for universities to remain relevant abroad, they need to be competitive within the rules imposed by a global knowledge economy. This global knowledge economy advances global capitalism as a function of a market economy

(Castells 2010). According to Bourdieu (1998), it is not only global capitalism that restructures and rearranges human social relations; the principles and practices of neo-liberalism also govern it. Viewed through the lens of enframing, it underscores specific discourse formations aimed to develop an attitude of 'imposition (challenging forth) that discloses and frames people and things as resources' (Belu 2017: 24).

Peters & Jandric (2018) reiterate that technology or enframing in modern society forges a new world for universities across the globe. For example, these authors report how industrial capitalism is weakening and slowly being replaced with business sectors that embrace digitalisation. Over the last two decades, we have witnessed how multinational corporations such as Apple, Microsoft, Facebook, Air B&B, Uber, and many others have generated more significant profits than the oil and gas industrial corporations. This means that over the last forty years, we have gradually shifted from an industrial to a post-industrial civilization. In universities, this situation is not any different, as they are gradually phasing in the use of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) designed to replace the old world of classroom-based, face-to-face teaching and learning. For example, at the institution where the first author works, plans for the in-phasing of a fully online Post-Graduate Certificate in Education qualification are already in place. If all goes according to plan, the implementation date is 2022. MOOCs, according to Peters & Jandric (2018), should be viewed as post-industrial education and cognitive capitalism, where social media are dominant within learning management systems. According to McRae (2013: 1), this

> … new generation of technology platforms promise to deliver 'personalized learning' for each and every student. This rebirth of the teaching machine centres on digital software tutors (known as adaptive learning systems) and their grand claims to individualize learning by controlling the pace, place and content for each and every student.

This shift to a not-so-brave, new online world is mainly about digital capabilities and the inconceivable possibilities and realities that a digital world can create. This new world with its infinite possibilities is evident in how the internet expanded into an information superhighway of stored data, which is spread and distributed to various networks and is used by multinational

corporations. Such data is used by the application of various algorithms to predict the future with a high degree of probability, turning machines into super-forecasters. Berry (2011) explains how network software has been created to encourage a communicative environment of rapidly changing feedback mechanisms to tie humans and non-humans together into new aggregates. Berry (2011) writes:

> … faster processing speeds are crucial for them to be data-mined for predictive, marketing, and social monitoring purposes by govern-ments, corporations, and other large organisations, often without our knowledge or consent. This transforms our everyday lives into data, a resource to be used by others, usually for profit, which Heidegger terms *standing-reserve* (Heidegger cited by Berry 2011: 263).

In addition to the development of big data, there exists only a glimpse of its potential capabilities and uses. However, technological mobile devices such as smartphones, iPads, tablets and smartwatches, together with their Web 2.0 and 3.0 applications and capabilities, have imposed a new cultural imprint on human action and behaviour. These developments in the field of technology, Peters & Jandric note, have created a new social order of 'interactivity, interconnectivity, automation of social functions and a lack of privacy' (2018: 3). These new social orders have created the development of new norms and new forms of thinking that have slowly replaced *Dasein,* where lived experience and people's attachment to the physical world were the focus. Thus, technology has *brought forth*, as Heidegger names it, something concealed that inhabited our being, that in the process crafted particular modes of being. This new world of digitisation, which has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, is the new cultural imprint (or world) that universities must instil in their students to understand, so that they can be active role players in the system. It is predicted that this shift to online work and business might become the new norm, which means the shift to a whole new world that revolves mainly around technology.

3 COVID-19: Forging a Web-Based Online World of Virtual Teaching and Learning

Before we present a portrait of this new online virtual world of teaching and

learning and how it is expressed in universities due to COVID-19, let us first look at what space is. To do so, we draw from the scholarly work of Merleau-Ponty (1962) entitled *The Phenomenology of Perception*. According to Merleau-Ponty's (1962/ 2005) 'lived body' theory, in order for space to have meaning, an experiencing living body must be present to experience it. This means that the living body gives meaning to space, viewed as silent, invisible and confined to specific natural laws, in order for the body to function. Merleau-Ponty holds the view that the human body is the first point of contact with the material world. The first point of contact of the body with the world takes place unconsciously after birth. From that moment onwards, the body starts to learn to make sense of the various orientations of space, such as depth, height, verticality, horizontality, length and breadth, amongst other things.

Furthermore, the body learns to move mainly forward and then backwards, upright using its legs and not hands, amongst many other things. This is an extremely complex phase of human existence as the person tries to comprehend/conceive the perceptual field of space. In time (as we grow older), we learn to understand human connectedness in this visible world with its own dimensions of space. By understanding, we mean the person learns how to anchor the body in this spatial world. Over time, this understanding deepens, and we soon learn to connect with all other objects in time and space. All of this is living space and we learn to experience the world through our bodies. We also learn that meaning is always present. For example, when we enter our homes or offices at work, there is a particular mood and various tactile, emotional and sensory responses are triggered, such as happiness, joy or anxiety and tension, among others. We also learn to connect with our environments through our sense organs, that is touching, seeing, hearing, tasting and smelling. From this perspective, the body is seen as the centre of action, and this action Merleau-Ponty describes as an expression of the 'will', which automatically gives the body intelligibility and privileged metaphysical status. This connection to an attached world is also referred to as the physical space that the body views as his or her home (hence the term 'mother earth'). It raises the question: What is the nature of physical space within the confines of classroom-based, face-to-face teaching and learning, as well as online or virtual teaching and learning in universities?

Milne (2006) captures the various types of physical spaces that exist in universities coherently. There are classrooms (or lecture theatres) where teaching and learning take place. This space conforms to various orientations

and dimensions (size) with a particular layout such as a workstation in the front of the venue for lecturers, seating arrangements for students (comprised of desks), and movement/walkway space for lecturers to move around between rows to reach students. This space is equipped with teaching tools such as chalkboards (or whiteboards) to write notes, visual aids such as laptop and data projectors, smartboards, speakers, Wi-Fi for internet connectivity and so forth. This space is intelligible and takes into account aspects such as the mood of the lecturer or students, rules and behaviours that guide human action. This formal physical classroom space further extends to physical, social spaces such as parks or gardens, cafeterias, coffee shops and restaurants. These spaces have a more relaxed atmosphere, where students can be who they are within the boundaries of the rules. Then there are study spaces consisting of multi-level libraries with workspace for students (desks, tables and computers to access the internet), small group workspaces (for study) or meeting rooms for seminars. This space has unwritten rules of silence, reading and study. Universities also have private physical spaces such as hostels or dormitories with dining halls. The rhythm of university life in all these spaces is organised around a timetable the student receives for classes, tests, examinations and assignments. This means that all learning activities are structured and mapped on these timetables. The various spatial aspects that make up the totality of university physical space makes various spatial aspects explicit and visible, a particular kind of environment conducive to face-to-face teaching and learning. This is done to facilitate the smooth delivery of the curriculum. These physical spaces are visibilities that reveal human hands and discourses that speak to the heart and soul of everyday life in a university (Sharpe, Beetham & Freitas 2010).

In the online world of virtual reality, the situation is very different. In this space, the classroom, library, social engagement, meeting rooms, seminar rooms, amongst many other features, are replaced with an internet-based virtual learning environment which is constituted of various learning management systems (LMSs), such as Blackboard, iKamva, Google Suite, and other massive open online courses (MOOCs). Marin, Simon & Masscelein refer to this world as the 'screen universe' (2018: 56). In other words, it is in an imaginary non-real world on a technological device where lecturers, students and colleagues meet to carry out their various responsibilities. Van de Oudeweetering & Decuypere refer to this screen as a place where 'interacting visualising practices' take place (2019: 109). These LMSs (which are discussed in more detail below) are designed to meet synchronously and asynchronously.

Virtual social spaces are online social media communities such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Snapchat, amongst many others. This brief description of physical space and online or virtual space reveals fundamental ontological differences between the two worlds.

While physical space represents an environment that mediates lived experience and human contact, where the human sense organs are actively engaged to collect data in time and space, virtual space is a man-made artificial notional or imagined world with no physical contact. While physical space makes human hands visible, online or virtual spaces hide (make invisible) human hands involved in the images conveyed between users and producers. According to Ward (2018), instead of being in the real, physical face-to-face setting with the lecturer who incarnates and illustrates the material to be learned, students sit and stare at the screen. In other words, in an online space there exists little or no time for the student to actively engage with the lecturer through questioning, 'clarifying or challenging … students passively consume pre-constructed resources supplied to them' (Ward 2018: 432). This unquestionably represents two completely different worlds with different intelligibility, rules and behaviours. Drawing on Deleuze's (1986) notion of visible and invisible, online spaces are untouched, and hide human hands and ongoing coping. They make invisible the finer intricacies and details of life; they are synonymous with a 'machine that is almost blind and mute even though it makes others see and speak' (1986: 34). This space creates a unique discourse of possibilities created through the imagination that discursively shapes what the student can see, should see, say and therefore think or perceive as a new world. This space promotes a particular way of being, acting and behaving. In other words, virtual space represents an invisible discursive formation that can distort people's thinking about the natural world. Of particular importance is that we (the authors of this paper, and we assume many other lecturers in universities across the country) are not familiar with or comfortable in this space. What these individuals (especially the 'authoritative ones') might miss in a virtual space is the human spirit, facial expressions, laughter and critical engagement, a norm in a physical space. Let us take a closer look at what this virtual world looks like for students and lecturers.

3.1 *Inside a Learning Management System*
A learning management system (LMS) is an internet-based, digital learning

platform that promotes the technologisation and digitisation of teaching and learning in higher education. In addition, it is a virtual learning space designed to integrate online elements with face-to-face instruction, or to develop completely online offerings with little or no face-to-face instruction (Wikipedia 2019).

A learning management system uses web-based server software and offers its users an array of communication and course content tools to share information, as well as comprehensive analytical software, such as the student retention feature (tracking students' performance). The communication tools, such as announcements, allow lecturers to post instant messages to students. An LMS also has a real-time chat feature to allow students who are online to chat with their peers. For lecturer-to-student communication, it has a discussion forum in which students can chat with lecturers in real-time or asynchronously. It also allows lecturers to send emails.

For course content, such a platform allows academics to upload various materials such as course content notes, journal articles (while adhering to copyright laws), assignments and tests, amongst others. When uploading materials, these learning management systems have a server software program to connect with a calendar where the lecturer can set dates (refined to specific times) when students can have access to the materials, and for the setting of deadlines for assignments or tests. Furthermore, lecturers can use a feature to post quizzes, tests and examinations that allow students to access them and to complete them online. Other features include a grade centre where assignments submitted can be checked for plagiarism, tracked using statistics tracking, and marked through its grade centre, which can be done online or offline. One of the most important interactive tools is an interactive teaching platform that allows lecturers to do live streaming of lessons from anywhere on the planet, where there is internet accessibility. These lessons can be recorded and accessed later to be watched online or offline if they are downloaded. A media library where videos and various forms of media posts can be uploaded, is another feature of an LMS. All these features in the advanced analytic system of an LMS can be tracked to determine who accessed the platform and when the student or lecturer was active on it. The retention centre of LMSs allows lecturers to track all student activities, including how many times a student missed submission deadlines, as well as individual student performance in relation to the group average.

According to Bates (2014), learning management systems promote

mainly transmission teaching and subsequently, transmission learning. This, he argues, is because an LMS is viewed mainly as a high-quality internet-based delivery system, as opposed to offering high-quality teaching that promotes lecturer-to-student or student-to-student active engagement. These virtual platforms with all their powerful software applications, Bates argues, promote dark teaching that is effective in reinforcing memory learning. He holds the view that this approach is primarily due to its instrumentalist nature situated in a mechanistic, non-real learning space, where all that matters is the mastery of concepts, abstract ideas and facts. Dreyfus (2001), in his book *On the Internet,* shares similar sentiments as Bates by raising numerous concerns about the limitations of the virtual realm. To him, the main concern, amongst many others, is the fact that the virtual realm disregards an essential part of embodiment, that is the physical aspects of our existence and how they shape our human understanding of the world. It is the *lived-experience*, the non-conceptual dimension and elements of human existence, that provides a reason, that LMSs cannot provide. In a piece written seven years later, Dreyfus (2008) point out that online learning is passive, dispassionate and disengaged teaching. We are fully aware that there are many proponents that view the conceptual dimension as important and hold the view that it provides deep insight and reason, but what is absent is the element of thinking that drives human behaviour, described by Merleau-Ponty's (1962) notion of absorbed coping. In the absence of absorbed coping, the student acquires no fundamental awareness of the physical world, that includes existence, that leads to knowing and gives meaning to a person's life.

According to Peters & Jandric, these learning management machines were primarily designed to gain better control, enforce optimisation and monitor efficiency. The shift to online learning aims to transform education mainly to move towards 'increased standardisation, centralisation, and adaptive learning systems' (2018: 242). By so doing, the focus of learning is not about developing a student's unique understanding of reality– as a co-constructor with the teacher – but mainly as a source to commit to conceptualism, in line with a behaviourist paradigm. This is because universities, as explained in the previous sections, have become more focused on knowledge capitalism expressed as competencies formulated in a way that makes them objectively measurable. This argument is supported by the White Paper for Post-Graduate School Education and Training, which points out that one of the aims of higher education in South Africa is to develop graduates

with high-quality knowledge and high-level skills (DHET 2013). While this is the main focus of higher education, the needs of the students are moved to the periphery. In a behaviourist paradigm where the primary focus is on the transmission of information, the main objective is to instil in students, particular technologies of the self that do not allow students to take control of their own learning.

3.2 Biopower: The Online Digital University as a Producer of Human Capital

According to Foucault (1978), biopower is a system in which the human body (the student, in this context) is viewed as a central component in the operation of power relations. This power imposed by universities is expressed as a normative force that rules over the human subject. This is because the university is trapped in what Peters & Jandric (2018) refer to as a political knowledge economy. This statement is also corroborated by Peters (2004), citing the work of Readings, to explain how the university had already shifted course almost three decades ago in response to globalisation. Readings writes:

> … the University is becoming a different institution, one that is no longer linked to the destiny of the nation-state by virtue of its role as producer, protector, and inculcator of an idea of national culture. The process of economic globalisation brings with it the relative decline of the nation-state as the prime instance of the reproduction of capital around the world (2004: 69-70).

This shift to transnationalism and corporatisation, as pointed out by Peters, is not a negotiated space that opens up a dialogue between student and the university to discuss what is the best approach or most appropriate model to switch to in an online world, nor is it a space that considers the conditions in which students find themselves. Instead, this space is about the university's commitment to promote teaching and learning that harnesses knowledge for wealth creation. Therefore, it is fair to claim that the university has become a highly uncontested and unsymmetrical space concerning who decides what and when. Thus, what we observe is the enframing of the student into a new world with a complete disregard for the social and economic space in which they find

themselves. Excellence in this space is defined as a techno-bureaucratic discourse. Foucault (1978) points out in his essay on governmentality that the epistemic discourse of government is to lay claim on its citizens through various forms and formats, one of which is to optimise and control them. Dreyfus (cited in Peters & Jandric 2018:2-3) presciently and lyrically brings together Heidegger's notion of enframing and Foucault's discourse on power expressed as modern biopower, in the digital age:

> At the heart of Heidegger's thought is the notion of being, and the same could be said of power in the works of Foucault. The history of being gives Heidegger a perspective from which to understand how in our modern world *things* have been turned into *objects*. Foucault transforms Heidegger's focus on *things* to a focus on *selves* and how they became *subjects*. And, just as Heidegger offers a history of being, culminating in the technological understanding of being, in order to help us understand and overcome our current way of dealing with things as objects and resources, Foucault analyses several regimes of power, culminating in modern bio-power, in order to help us free ourselves from understanding ourselves as subjects.

In universities today, the target market is students who must be imbued with certain subjectivities, mindsets and capabilities. To do so, universities are more interested in promoting certain actions and behaviours through what Peters & Jandric (2018) term 'cognitive capitalism', expressed as a form of biopower to gain control over the human body. In a cognitive capitalist framework of thinking, human subjectivity is side-lined, teaching and learning are intensified, and the focus is on high-level thinking and critical engagement with course content, while theoretical knowledge is privileged over practical knowledge. In other words, learning is viewed as a product and not as a process. This strand of learning is mainly viewed from the perspective of behaviourism that does not recognise the reality that students face every day. This focus of teaching and learning reduces the human subjects to objects that are viewed as human resources expressed as biopower. This is because the vision of higher education is to be a service engine and innovation hothouse of global capital, which is best achieved through new digital technologies such as LMSs.

According to Heidegger (1977), for this shift to take place, a new

(digital) world must be forged and revealed as a norm, while the old (physical) world in which the human subject is the centre of attention, is slowly phased out. This shift is made to maximize profits at minimal expense. In other words, the essence of technology is the technologisation of the human subject, according to Heidegger's notion of technology as a form of enframing.

This shift should be viewed in the light of the new role of universities as a site of knowledge production and mechanism tied to a dynamic global market for knowledge, goods and services. In other words, while the focus in a constructivist epistemology is to promote and develop a student's under-standing and connectedness to the world, the behaviourist objective is cognitive knowledge capitalism (Scott 2012). According to Scott, the shift to cognitive knowledge capitalism aims to make learning more professionalised, follow-ing an objectivist approach with little or no focus on the cultural breadth, critical consciousness and intellectual independence of the student. This is because, as Lucrarelli, Peters & Vercellone (2013) note, the focus of teaching and learning is primarily on the practical expertise and instant employability of the student. This denotes a break with the constructivist view of learning (in the material world) and a re-alignment with the behaviourist view of learning (in the digital world) as the student, and his or her needs are no longer at the core of teaching and learning. The upshot of this shift is that universities are now becoming more aggressive as revenue-generating centres in their own right and no different from multinational corporations that are more interested in profits and worker productivity.

4   Recommendations

In the first part of this paper, we provided a general overview of the challenges facing the higher education sector with specific reference to who the student is that enters the university, by providing a portrait of the many personal problems that interfere with her becoming in the university. We then provided a succinct overview of what we mean, with the phrase 'dark teaching' as a backdrop to understand the possible learning challenges the student might face in an online environment. This discussion took us into the second part of the paper, where we explored the kinds of teaching and learning that can take place in an online world. Here we presented our pessimism about this shift and the dangers that dark teaching and learning holds. From this angle, we circled within and between the tensions associated with dark teaching, the concealed

meaning or hiddenness that online learning spaces hold, and the inconceivable impact of technology on the thinking and being of the future student.

Although we expressed our deep-seated worries about this shift, there are many important lessons that we can learn from this experience. It is very premature to predict the future of higher education and what kind of world awaits us post COVID-19, but technology and the constant advances made in technology will make it inescapable for lecturers and students. Therefore, we recommend that universities strive to provide adequate training to academics to design courses and pedagogies that will scaffold interactive dynamics constitutive of understanding the online world of teaching and learning. This training should be fine-tuned to resist what we see as dark teaching and learning, where online LMS is simply viewed as high-definition delivery machines of information, but to facilitate interactive approaches between the student and the lecturer. From this perspective, the training should take into account what an online culture entails, such as e-timetabling, effective time management, how to ensure more significant student commitment, greater flexibility, and how to design, structure and deliver online materials appropriately. In other words, one of the main recommendations is to create an online world that is student-friendly and student-centred, where the student becomes a co-constructor of knowledge. As former teachers, students and learners, we are aware that effective teaching is more than a dispassionate recital of facts and claims. Effective, passionate and caring teachers/lecturers engage with ideas to transport their students to new understandings. This is one of the aspects that is missing in online learning.

Over the last two decades, many new advances were made in technology, and we have witnessed the computing power and features that smartphones have to offer. We know that even more advances in the field of artificial intelligence will be made in the future. Therefore, university administrators and leaders must re-invent the university to tap into the powerful opportunities that smartphone technology has to offer. The question that begs asking here is how do we re-invent expressive patterns of gestures, movement, intonation, and various other dimensions of face-to-face teaching into a fully online virtual classroom environment?

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Using Emoticons to Reduce Transactional Distance: Navigating the Contextual Complexities of COVID-19 Imposed Virtual Learning Spaces

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Abstract
The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa has forcibly transformed higher education spaces. Without prior notice, universities have been plunged into a new trajectory where they had to adapt or lose the academic year. Institutions of higher learning have been continuously re-prioritising, and the universal strategy has been for institutions to scramble for online presence. However, online presence, that is, development of technical, curricular and infrastructural support to anchor online teaching, is not in itself a panacea to the myriad challenges of remote instruction. This chapter analyses the finer details of online teaching using Blackboard and WhatsApp online learning spaces. It interrogates the use of emoticons to reduce transactional distance in virtual learning spaces. We posit that emoticons bridge the gap and assist students in navigating the contextual complexities of COVID-19 imposed virtual learning spaces. Using multimodal discourse analysis as a theoretical lens, we problematise the idiosyncrasies and nuances of electronically mediated communication. In what we call COVID-19 settings and COVID-19 mode, students gravitate towards WhatsApp platforms where they can utilise emoticons to enhance their exchanges with the instructor and fellow students. The pervasive gravitation towards the use of emoticons to represent emotional and personality nuances as found in face-to-face interaction, is indicative of an

inherent propensity to reduce the transactional distance in online learning. Students may become unresponsive due to the transactional distance online. Therefore, this chapter underscores the need to adopt and integrate social media platforms in contextually applicable situations in an effort to interface and harness their power in support of online learning in electronically mediated communication. The physical, emotional and psychological distance involved in online learning is potentially isolating, hence students prefer WhatsApp with its voice notes and video calls, in search of the immediacy, voice, face, emotion and humanity that assures authentic feedback. Using the student agency reflected in the use of emoticons in learning, we theorise the re-learning of what we term a Digital Dialogic Pedagogy to empower Transition Teams to implement online learning effectively. We posit that the humanity of emoticons mediates and closes the gap and distance between content, instructor and learner, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, in which humanity has been redefined.

Keywords: COVID-19, online learning, emoticons, transactional distance, Blackboard, WhatsApp, humanity, Digital Dialogic Pedagogy

1 Introduction and Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed higher education in Africa, redirecting the trajectory of universities. Universities, just like businesses, have had to adapt to the new normal in order for them to save the academic year. Online presence has been central to the adaptation process. Virtual learning, also known variously as remote learning, online learning and e-Learning, has been widely adopted in institutions of higher learning in non-emergency situations (Garrison 2016; Hoffman 2018), and recently, as a global response to COVID-19, despite scant research on the internal processes involved.

Institutions were rendered vulnerable by the COVID-19 pandemic after in-person, on-campus instruction was rendered unsafe and impossible by the declaration of a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March 2020 (WHO 2020). To obviate a disaster precipitated by the unprecedented closure of institutions, online learning modalities had to commence at the start of the pandemic in South Africa. The pandemic scrambled priorities, and consequently, rethinking, realignment and recalibration of

values and priorities stopped being an option and became a necessity. COVID-19 spurred panic reminiscent of the Black Death in the Middle Ages. Unlike the Spanish Flu of 1918-1920, the Asian flu of 1956-1958, or Swine flu in 2009, COVID-19 triggered unprecedented solidarity, starting with social distancing with variations across nations, escalating to total lockdowns and shutting down of economies, as never before experienced globally.

Audrey Azoulay (2020), the Director General of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), is on record decrying the monumental disruption that educational institutions witnessed on a large scale globally. Due to the unprecedented disruptions, basic and higher education institutions had to shut down for the safety of all stakeholders, key of which is the student. Unexpectedly and inevitably so, institutions and individuals had to migrate their thinking from routine ordinary thinking to the COVID-19 mode, in which emergency decisions were made cautiously, as their impact was certainly set to change the course of history for all those involved. From the high echelons of educational administration, the promotion of online education has been an unequivocal decision (UNESCO 2020).

A number of universities globally such as Harvard, Yale, Cambridge and universities in South Africa were already utilising online spaces alongside face-to-face instruction prior to the COVID-19 emergency. However, research indicates that migrating entirely from traditional to virtual classrooms is a huge step that requires elaborate planning, significant fiscal and human resource investment, as well as concerted efforts from stakeholders (Picciano 2017; Yang & Li 2018; Filius *et al.* 2019; Bao 2020). Notably, online presence, that is, the development of technical, curricular and infrastructural support to anchor online teaching, is not in itself a panacea to the myriad challenges of virtual pedagogy. In the backdrop of inevitable COVID-19 induced migration of learning from brick-and-mortar, on-campus, in-person to virtual learning, this chapter analyses the finer details of teaching and learning in online spaces, particularly student-lecturer interaction in the COVID-19 crisis. It interrogates the use of emoticons as communication strategies to reduce transactional distance, which is a hindrance in virtual learning spaces.

Online learning, by nature, causes a sense of isolation, detachment and uncertainty. The limitation is in that while institutions grappled with the immediate need of transferring the physical orientation of learning space from brick-and-mortar to virtual in response to COVID-19, there are critical underlying issues that characterised the new normal, and yet were relegated to

the background. Issues pertaining to actual student learning, cognitive processing and learner variability in virtual classrooms became obscured. Institutions did not immediately focus on augmenting or transforming teaching; instead, they rapidly focused on changing the method of delivery, shifting from brick and mortar to virtual. Prudent as this reaction was, it has some inherent challenges. Foremost is what we observe to be the challenge of creating virtual schools before equipping the learners and teachers with the necessary skills and tools to navigate the available online spaces effectively for optimal intellectual development and positive learning outcomes, emancipation and social progression.

2 Literature Review: COVID-19 and Online Learning Spaces

UNESCO (2020) states that over 1,5 billion learners were affected by COVID-19, related institution closures in 165 countries. Both UNESCO (2020) and WHO (2020) acknowledge that higher education institutions have nowhere else to run to for relief and survival, except online. Thirty million learners across 3000 tertiary institutions in mainland China, Italy, Singapore and Iran, rushed to establish online teaching in the wake of COVID-19 (Bao 2020; UNESCO 2020). The same happened in South Africa, where higher education institutions migrated fully online, including those in spaces of rurality serving a predominantly marginalised population. To provide background on the question of online learning, we refer to a forecast report on internet connectivity in Africa. The report indicated that the unique facets of Africa, and the diversity of languages and culture, called on individual countries to develop targeted plans for online content development as opposed to consuming content from western markets (Adkins 2011). While lecturers are skilled in teaching and in classroom management, there is consensus in research indicating that they are not competent or trained in the design of effective digital curricula (CREDO 2015). A four-year study by the Stanford University Centre for Research on Educational Outcomes indicates that competence in instructional practices does not translate to competence in digital curriculum design (CREDO 2015). Furthermore, the background that flags issues of contention is that existing global trends of knowledge and skills transfer by institutions of higher learning have been criticised comprehensively. Higher education continues to gain notoriety for instrumentalising, professionalising, vocationalising, corporatising and technologising education

(Thomson 2001: 244). This gravitation towards a commercial academy has been criticised in epistemological and ontological terms (Bourdieu 1998; Dall'Alba & Barnacle 2007).

Technologising higher education comes with huge investments. However, immense investments in technology do not always result in pedagogically successful students (Stanford & Bowers 2008). According to several studies from the Community College Research Centre at Teachers College, Columbia University, low-income, academically underprepared and rural students fare badly in online learning (Capra 2013). While acknowledge-ing that traditional face-to-face learning has its drawbacks, it is important to note that the nature and design of online course material seem to amplify the tedium associated with regimented learning. A huge workload resulting from online tasks simply fails to provide opportunities for social and cognitive engagement, critical thinking or evaluation, as there is inadequate guidance (Capra 2013). This is in line with the concerns of this chapter, in which students seek ways of reducing transactional distance to break out of the tedious and sterile online lecture note-posts, PowerPoint presentations, quizzes and super-ficial discussion forums.

A Times Higher Education (2018) survey predicted that by 2030, a significant number of prestigious universities will have migrated their courses fully online. However, comparing digital and on-campus, in-person and contact learning remains a source of much ambivalence.

Online learning has numerous benefits on the learner. Research done by Piciano (2017) indicates that students who are exposed to, and subsequently engage in online learning, tend to be intrinsically motivated to learn, are better organised self-starters and can initiate and complete tasks without supervision. However, amid these benefits there are challenges.

2.1 COVID-19 and the Digital Divide in South Africa

It is important to discuss COVID-19 in light of the digital divide in South Africa briefly. Reports on poverty and gross inequalities in South Africa indicate that approximately 56% of South Africans live on less than R41 per day (Duncan-Williams 2020). Access to information technologies largely depends on affordability. However, with the yawning gap between the haves and the have-nots, the unprecedented and unanimous gravitation towards online learning resulting from COVID-19 had inherent challenges. In the wake

of COVID-19, Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande was quick to indicate that no student would be left behind in the adoption of emergency online learning (Dlulane 2020). In tandem with the Minister's proposal of restructuring the academic calendar, Head of Universities SA Professor Ahmed Bawa also indicated that the underlying principle was that every student should have a fair opportunity of completing the academic year: no student should be left behind (Asma 2020). Cognisant of the digital divide in South Africa, UNICEF South Africa launched the #Love2Learn campaign to encourage learners to learn and be creative during lockdown (UNICEF 2020). Apart from the challenges of access, there lies a subtle yet critical challenge of an epistemological nature that we explore in this chapter.

While proponents of online learning present it as a seemingly straightforward and seamless process, the reality is that it is fraught with complexity. Although it is an undebatable and inescapable reality that virtual learning has been a lifesaver and a practical option in the COVID-19 situation (Mhlanga & Moloi 2020), it should, however, be noted that the process of online learning comes with significant costs on the user, in this case, the student, who is the fundamental stakeholder. Edmundson (2012), a Professor of English at the University of Virginia, stated that online teaching made intellectual life more sterile and more abstract than it already was. While this view may seem extreme and exaggerated, the reality is that for students to access online content, consume it, participate in online activities, they usually have to remove themselves from real-life relationships and situations. In the current COVID-19 situation, the students need to seclude themselves, in COVID-19 settings; they need to isolate in some kind of quasi-quarantine where there is total concentration, flawless connectivity and a conducive atmosphere to learning.

One logical assumption is that millennials, (also called the net age or digital natives) for whom the internet is more of a home than a medium, and for whom status updates are a way of life, find online learning satisfying. On the contrary, research indicates that online learning is impersonal and isolating even for the digitised generation. High rates of failure and attrition have been found to be a direct consequence of student isolation (Morris 2009). Although online teaching platforms have discussion boards, these are sterile, academic, and involve dry conversations coupled with a level of social anonymity offering limited opportunities for humane dialogue and reflection (Aragon & Johnson 2008; Duncan & Bartnett 2009). Evidently, the socio-emotional

aspect of student learning is neglected in the preoccupation with academic conventions that isolate the learner. Of the myriad limitations of online learning, we focused on interaction and communication as pillars of the entire learning process.

2.2 Emoticons as Paralinguistic Markers

The aspect of online interaction introduces the use of emoticons or emotion icons in learning spaces. Research into the history of emoticons indicates that emoticons started as text-based and the innovation developed into graphical emoticons. The term 'emoticon' was added to the dictionary in 2001 as official internet lingo (Warren & Macalpine 2014). The most common emoticon is the smiley face. Artist Harvey Ball created the first smiley face in 1963. The smiley visually looks like a yellow circular button with two black dots representing the eyes and showing the curve of a mouth. The artist created the smiley symbol for an insurance company that was conducting a campaign. The object-tive of the campaign was to raise the morale and spirits of its employees. As it turned out, the concept worked and the smiley became popular inspiring the creation of subsequent emoticons for various emotion representation (Tomic, Martinez & Vrbanec 2013). The smiley symbol was trademarked in 1968, in London. This original idea of the smiley face as a morale booster is quite rele-vant to this study, as we note that online learning is emotionally sterile in its academic endeavor and technical medium. Vandergriff (2013) advances the view of emoticons as affiliate strategies employed by communication partici-pants to build rapport. In a similar thread of thought, Park *et al.* (2013) observe that emoticons are not necessarily limited to emotion specific references, but rather are in themselves representative of socio-cultural norms with varying meanings. Among the limitations of virtual learning, is the obvious challenge presented by the absence of non-verbal and paralinguistic effects such as body language, gestures, eye contact, gaze, intonation and word stress. These aspects are replaced by emoticon use as students strive for satisfaction and optimum benefit in their communication encounters with course instructors.

Online learning, like traditional face-to-face learning, depends on robust communication between technology, instructor and learner. The three constituents present a complex triad in virtual interaction in which we see multimodality and collaborative online learning in a dynamic interface. Fol-lowing Kendon (2004), we view communication as an embodied, multimodal

system where the visual and audio modalities are woven and integrated intricately to convey meaning successfully. In essence, the non-verbal components of communication such as tone, pitch, gestures and emoticons, which we theorise as *digital gesticulation*, are integral aspects of speech and language itself (Bavelas 1994; Rossinni 2011). This perspective of the non-verbal or paralinguistic as important aspects of communication underpins our objective of theorising the re-learning of virtual classroom practice drawing from emoticon use in communication threads by students.

There is an ongoing debate surrounding emoticon use in formal learning spaces. Marder, Houghton, Erz, Harris & Javornik (2019) state that emoticon use is a double-edged sword, with the advantage of creating positive impressions and warmth amongst the students but also possibly risking the perception of the sender as incompetent. In their experimental study with university students evaluating university staff on personality and competencies depending on the use of emoticons in communication, Marder *et al.* (2019) conclude that the benefits of emoticon use far outweigh the perceived risks. Essentially, the rigidity around emoticon use in higher education, and hesitancy of staff in the adoption of this informal mode of communication symbolises the fossilization of prestigious linguistic norms (Berman 2006). In this chapter, we perceive emoticons as non-verbal proxies that approximate and simulate face-to-face communication, thus introducing an element of humanity into an otherwise rigid exchange.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The chapter is anchored on concepts of Multimodal Discourse Analysis and Online Collaborative Learning. Using Multimodal Discourse Analysis as a theoretical lens, we problematise the idiosyncrasies and nuances of electronically mediated communication. Multimodal Discourse Analysis is theoretically grounded on Systemic Functional Linguistics Theory that was developed by Michael Halliday. Multimodality is information exchange that is facilitated and realised using multiple sensing channels or modes. In essence, multimodality is a diverse concept that has been used broadly in teaching and learning. Jewitt and Kress (2003) view multimodality as an aspect of social semiotics whereby different modes of communication converge in a cross-cultural context. Further, multimodality is premised on the notion that apart from language, there are other semiotic systems that contribute to meaning making (Jewitt

2014). We particularly find this theory relevant for a study of online learning because it references and illuminates the multiple modes that are harnessed in the creation of online learning content such as on Blackboard. This implies that apart from spoken or written discourse, other modes are used, for example visual (images, still pictures, videorised content), audio (sounds, musical content) and visual in combination with audio, as in the context of power-point presentations with embedded video and audio. We draw from Multimodal Discourse Analysis in its insistence on the notion that human beings communicate and make meaning in a variety of ways (Jewitt, Bezemer & O'Halloran 2016). This implies that when students are learning, they utilise multiple modes to make meaning. Online learning is predominantly digitally oriented, automatically making use of the electronic, visual and audio affordances.

We also employed concepts of Online Collaborative Learning (OCL) (Harasim 2012) to support Multimodal Discourse Analysis. The two theories converge on the concept of collaborative conversations on a medium such as the internet. Collaborative learning interfaces student, teacher and learning material through a technological medium (Bates 2015). The OCL model allows for deep learning, communicative and conversation learning and spaces for knowledge construction. We are especially interested in emphasis on conversation and discussion forums, as it is in these that students seek connection, warmth, social and emotional validation as anchors in the learning process. Discussion is not to be considered as an optional or additional aspect to the mainstream curriculum, but rather as the fundamental element of learning (Bates 2015). It is through unrestricted discussion that learners develop, question and evaluate their academic knowledge. It is also in discussion that students tend to use emoticons to reflect their inner selves, emotions and psychological state, something that they could easily do using non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures and other body language in face-to-face interaction. The OCL model is underpinned by three concepts of the internet, collaboration and conceptual knowledge construction (Harasim 2012). Online collaborative learning supports student learning through creating knowledge by innovating and inventing and problem solving, as opposed to memorisation.

3 Research Methodology
3.1 Research Objectives
The research objectives of this study were to:

(i)   Explore and problematise the limitations of exchanges in virtual learning platforms.

(ii) Analyse the use of emoticons in reducing transactional distance in virtual learning spaces, particularly in the COVID-19 crisis.

(iii) Theorise re-learning through a Digital Dialogic Pedagogy to empower transition teams in virtual learning.

3.2 Research Approach

The study employed a qualitative approach in which a purposive sample of one WhatsApp group and one lecturer, was studied over a period starting from 26 March 2020, Level 5 Lockdown in South Africa to Alert Level 3 (20 June 2020). The study utilised a WhatsApp group for third years pursuing a degree programme in the Faculty of Social Sciences degree programme at a university in South Africa. The class was composed of 45 third year students and one lecturer (one of the researchers, who was a participant observer). The class migrated to Blackboard Collaborate, an online Learning Management System. We used interaction patterns of students and their lecturer on the WhatsApp platform as they discussed learning materials uploaded on Blackboard, with particular reference to emoticon use, as a point of departure in our theorising about re-learning to teach in emergencies.

4 Discussion

4.1 Possibilities Emerging from Emoticon Use

The gravitation towards online and WhatsApp platforms has to do with the possibilities of deeper interaction. Whenever students communicate in an academic setting, which is predominantly for learning, the overarching aim is to get as much meaning as is practically possible in an ongoing discourse event, exchange or conversation. Given the high stakes nature of higher education, students are acutely aware of what they are contending with: the expectations and merits of high achievement against the pitfalls of dismal performance. The question of grades, standing out enough to get distinctive grades and the nagging threat of losing government funding should expected standards not be

met, is a cloud that hangs over many students' heads in higher education institutions. Consequently, there are multiple underlying issues that prompt students' use of emoticons, ranging from social, emotional and psychological needs.

We grouped emoticons and word meanings in a manner that highlights emoticons that share common semantic contexts as clustered in close proximity. We isolated groups of emoticons and the subsequent themes that we perceived as important to the students. We assessed student engagement tendencies and noted the interaction patterns that emerged. The results demonstrate that while the meaning of emoticons varies, it is significantly similar for individuals within the same discourse community. We classified students' main reason for emoticon use as socio-emotional, which is the need for assurance, expression of gratitude, expression of humour and the need to share humour, need to demonstrate feelings of openness, appreciation and *ubuntu*/humanity. This relates to the key submissions of Multimodality that the meaning-making exercise of human beings is multi-level as well as multifarious (Jewitt, Bezemer & O'Halloran 2016). The table below categorises the ten recurring emoticons with the common and corresponding contexts accompanying each use.

Table 1: Ten Emoticons for Socio-emotional Expression

Description	Graphic	Student Interaction Context
Smiley/happy face	😊	Response to confirmation that notes uploaded on Blackboard will be compressed and sent on WhatsApp for the benefit of those who failed to access or open the files. Used in greeting and signing off.
Sad frowning face	🙁	Request for clarification on a research task, seeking assurance on campus re-opening.
Laughing Face	😂	Laughing at a fellow student, asking if they are ever going to complete their studies in 2020. Finding humour in adversity.

Crying face		Accompanying question of when students will receive zero-rated data; requesting for new academic calendar.
Confused face		Accompanying a personal narrative about challenges at home hindering access to uploaded research tasks. Sarcasm.
Applause		Response to lecturer's promise for audio lecturers.
Heart		As a signing off emoticon. Expressing appreciation.
Praying hands		Thanking peers or lecturer and thanking God.
Sleepy/dozing face		Expressing fatigue and boredom because of pressure.
Clapping hands		Grateful and thankful. Used in greeting and signing off.

The ten emoticons described above were selected as the most commonly used by students and their lecturer in the group chat. There are emoticons that are rarely used by students due to the norms of behaviour and the fixity of academic conventions stated earlier. Students attempt to express themselves while at the same time they are constrained by norms that force them to function in ways that can be perceived as agreeable and professional, and falling within the ethical limits of an academic setting. The findings indicate that emoticons are not as frivolous and casual as they may seem. They are expressive and pointed. They save time, space and face, something that interlocutors are weary of. When it would seem unbecoming and unprofessional and unacceptable to say, *I am smiling with joy and pleasure after receiving your announcement, notes,* a student simply inserts a smiley and an icon with clapping hands signaling gratitude. In a significant way, our findings contradict Bakir & Haji's (2019) findings that students use emoticons randomly without knowing the exact linguistic position for their use. Emotion

icons help to re-engage students, thus supporting and rebuilding relationships that can facilitate the setting of a firm foundation for them to be receptive to academic learning. Sharing social and emotional life through emoticons facilitates collaboration and co-creation (Harasim 2012).

From the conversations from which the emoticons were drawn, students had immense propensity for both the verbal and para-linguistic aspects of interpersonal interaction. As students were already confounded by the new normal of isolation, quarantine and lockdown, the use of emoticons in conversations fostered executive ownership of the learning process. It facilitated the social-relational aspects of learning. Going forward, we envisage a deliberate process where institutions acknowledge the enormity of the task of going virtual on a cohort that has previously been learning in a conventional classroom. This entails investing not only in masks and sanitisers, but also in intensive tooling and skilling through use of transition teams attached to departments in universities. Teaching the teacher on how to re-imagine content, connection, humanity and solidarity with students is a fundamental step of re-learning the art of inculcating knowledge and imparting skills through a screen to an audience whose presence and attention cannot be proven.

Online learning was always an additional latent aspect of the academy that was utilised as blended instruction, but not considered as a compulsory component of learning. However, fast forward to end of March to April 2020, after weeks of lockdown and social distancing among other strict COVID-19 pandemic-imposed restrictions and prevention protocols, institutions found themselves facing one possibility for the rescue of the academic year: online learning. While there are many categories and facets to online learning, the most common and attractive feature is that students, who are mostly post-millennials, can readily identify with the many dimensions, platforms and demands of virtual learning spaces. A good example is Blackboard, which is famous for its interactive and collaborative tools that allow lecturers and students to share and view content in multiple modes. A quick navigation within the Blackboard learning platform presents it as an elaborate forum with audiovisual and multimodal opportunities for learning whereby, text, PowerPoint, audio, video text; still images, sound and musical content can be shared synchronously and asynchronously. The multimodal and multi-semiotic nature of this particular platform allows users who have a web camera to benefit from mutual video connection. The visual and audio components add a rich texture to the learning experience. Our observation of the drawbacks of

online teaching at a time of great necessity to migrate online due to the need to reduce contact and halt the spread of COVID-19, is aimed at focusing a microscope on the inevitable gaps that exist concerning interaction in brick and mortar and online learning. Academia as a genre is disciplined and impersonal. In the COVID-19 mode of heightened uncertainty and distress, students gravitate towards online and WhatsApp platforms where they can utilise emoticons to enhance their exchanges with the lecturer and fellow students. For students in the sample who needed social, emotional and psychological support and mentoring, Blackboard represented learning content, while WhatsApp represented dialogue and communication. These feed into what Letseka, Letseka & Pitsoe (2019) describe as sustainable e-Learning.

4.2 The Paradox of Anonymity and Presence

The issue of reducing transactional distance is not one-dimensional. While it is true that students prefer having a noticeable psychological proximity to their instructor and by extension, their learning material, there is also a latent need for students to seek proximity to their instructors so that *they can be understood*. Therefore, lecturers *teach* their students and learn *from* them. It almost sounds clichéd, that you interact better with an individual if you understand them, you understand better if you have an opportunity to learn. Therefore, the need for the learning to be bi-directional does not diminish in the student and the instructor, although certainly, opportunities for this to happen realistically are diminished exponentially by the nature of the virtual forums. The faceless and anonymous sense of online learning is detrimental to both the learner and instructor socially, emotionally and academically. The presence of both can be facilitated by strategies that seem to ignore the conventions of academia as a genre (Marder 2019; Berman 2006).

In a communication event or discourse event with addressor and addressee, an emoticon reflects the addressor's emotions. Emoticons lubricate communication and simulate traditional face-to-face communication by giving an impression of closeness that resembles direct communication. The craving for the holistic nature of traditional face-to-face communication and the concept of *Ubuntu/*Humanity can be said to influence communication patterns of individuals in virtual spaces in the South African context. In an attempt to sound more human, individuals seek and explore opportunities to be human-like, to appeal to the receiver of the message. Drawing from Kendon's (2004)

classification of gestures used in communication such as hand and arm movements, we conceptualise a broader paralinguistic cluster of non-verbal and digital aids that form a constellation of communicative toolkit in the virtual classroom. Table 2 is a summative representation of the nature and functions of emoticons as digital gestures that we adapted and developed following Kendon (2004). The representation was influenced by the leads in student communication threads on WhatsApp.

Table 2: Nature and Function of Emoticons as Para-Linguistic Markers Adapted from Kress (2004)

Nature	Function
1) **Iconic**: they represent concrete objects and events.	1) **Referential**: they are part of the referential content.
2) **Metaphoric**: they represent abstract ideas.	2) **Pragmatic**: they show the attitude of the speaker towards the content and indicate how content is to be interpreted.
3) **Beats/Rhythm**: they represent repetitive gestures that usually mark the discourse flow.	3) **Interpersonal**: they regulate interaction.
4) **Digital Deictic**: they point to something.	4) **Cohesive and Coherence**: they connect thematically related but temporally separated parts of discourse.

5 Student Wellness and Authentic Learning: Towards a Hybrid Online Learning Model

The concept of social emotional development is crucial in all learning despite mode. While virtual spaces have always existed and been used for several social and educational and business purposes; in an alarmingly rapid turn of events, COVID-19 inevitably transformed the virtual space into a space of refuge socially and educationally. Families in isolation, quarantine and subsequently lockdown depended solely on chats, video and voice calls for interaction on various social media platforms such as skype, WhatsApp, Instagram, while businesses and other institutions harnessed the power of Zoom® conferencing and webinars to keep business going. Instantaneously, virtual

became the new rendezvous, playground, classroom and home. We posit that the abrupt transformation of digital spaces plunged students and lecturers into an unconventional territory with extraordinary circumstances, thereby calling for frontier thinking. We conceptualise the erasure of boundaries between classroom, playground and home. Just as the digital classroom's walls are arbitrary, invisible and abstract, also viewed as non-existent, we theorise around the incorporation of every available tool that can be harnessed and channelled towards giving students a neat balance of epistemic access, academic mastery and social emotional development. Social and emotional learning can only be possible if and when we harness available resources to interface, merge and integrate the social, emotional and academic aspects to maximise the student experience. While this may seem to be an act of deviating from the priority of the academy, which is positive learning outcomes, research indicates that students fare better when their social and emotional needs are met. Employability of graduates with a high emotional quotient is also high as opposed to the employability of those presenting with a low quotient.

The reality with students coming from rural areas is that inequalities automatically bind on them by the nature of their geographical location. There are inequalities that are inherently associated with being born, raised and educated in a rural province. In deploying learning tools, it is crucial to be cognisant that we are catering for a diverse cohort, unique in its demographic composition - some coming from broken homes, others from economically vulnerable circumstances where arguments start over slices of bread, conflict consists of food parcel distribution squabbles. These inequalities, however difficult to imagine, determine the ability of a student to fit in a socially sterile online learning environment. As we have relocated from our potentially COVID-19 unfriendly and germ-friendly crowded hallways and auditoriums, lecture theatres and classrooms to the sterile digital spaces, we should be weary of conducting sterile classes that have no resemblance to humane interaction, thus leaving students with an unrelenting hunger for a social and emotional connection to trigger cognitive processing. Emoticons have the capacity to dilute sterility and disturb convention, creating a new, hybrid model of learning.

5.1 Theorising Re-learning
5.1.1 Digital Dialogic Pedagogy: Filling the Social Abyss in Online Learning
Online learning has an element of anonymity, with the lecturer just speaking

to no one in particular. The monologue that characterises most online classes is what prompts students to seek opportunities for what we call dialogic interaction through emoticons. Giving a human face to the intellectual pursuits and otherwise abstract academic content closes transactional distance. There is the risk of fracture and absence of the thread that connects interlocutors in a discourse event. While Blackboard tries to close this gap in a fashion similar to Zoom webinars where individuals can chat back, raise hands, and have their microphone unmuted so that they can speak out, there are still gaps in synchronous and asynchronous modes of learning that can only be filled by face-to-face communication. Anything resembling face-to-face interaction remains exactly that, something that resembles but is not the original. Lacking is the warmth, proximity and humanity of the exchange that allows empathy, learning and collaboration at a level that is unmatched. What these applications and platforms can do is to attempt to bridge the gap with the acknowledgement that we should not expect them to replace face-to-face communication. In multimodal style, the emoticon then stands out as giving face and emotion to the interaction and the interactants in a dialogic manner that allows dialogue to influence discourse. The e manner in which students visit a lecturer for one-on-one consultation after a mass lecture - seeking affirmation, recognition and erasing the anonymity associated with just being one of the 100 students in the auditorium, is the same approach in reducing the transactional distance through the use of emoticons.

5.1.2 Reflection and Re-learning from Inequality

To understand better the urgent need for re-learning at national, institutional and faculty levels, we reflect on the implications of embracing emergency e-Learning in Africa, particularly in post-apartheid South Africa. For Farhadi (2019), to normalise online learning, also referred to as e-Learning, is to normalise a form of education that is best known for maintaining the evident structural inequalities, namely, race, class and support. In comparison with our case of institutions in rural spaces of post-apartheid South Africa, embracing online learning wholesale at the hurried speed of COVID-19 impositions is akin to epistemic exclusion, something that students have been fighting against since 1976. It is important to note that flagging issues of concern regarding online learning is not condemning this learning option and the myriad positive benefits it brings in its wake, but rather it is an attempt to highlight the importance of taking all the factors, albeit minute, into consideration, for the

benefit of the positive learning outcomes for the students involved. The notion of re-learning spills into design of learning content. In the design of online teaching material, it is fundamental that the instructor masters two components. First is the internet technology to be used. It is crucial to have a clear knowledge and to learn the nuances of the learning platform of choice. Second is the student population to which the learning materials are directed. Without adequate knowledge of the audience demography and geography, it is not possible to design context-friendly, context-responsive and globally relevant learning activities that can facilitate conceptual knowledge acquisition and construction in line with Harasim's (2012) concept of Online Collaborative Learning. For online learning to accommodate the epistemological positions of faculty and instructors in all disciplines, there is need for a high level of technical knowledge and skill in online learning management systems.

Reflecting on the thousands of students who feel disenfranchised due to lack of supporting pillars to online learning, we question what the barriers, marginalising tools and inequalities are, that are directly or indirectly, consciously or subconsciously reified when crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic leave individuals in nostalgia. It is common for human beings to idealise nostalgia of the past, a past that was not perfect, but was in several ways better than the present. A past that was normal with its struggles compared to the new normal that is confusing and potentially exclusionary in nature.

The experience of online learning has its lights and shadows. Insights emerging from the theorisation of the online learning space have to use as a point of departure a deliberate obsessive preoccupation with the idea of the student as the fundamental stakeholder. There arises a notable fragility in the process of learning due to dependence on technical, infrastructural and structural issues. Thus, to access online learning, students on the one hand have to contend with precarious connectivity, low network coverage, low bandwidth and declining attention span. Online spaces have the challenge of placing individuals in isolation bubbles, ideological boxes in which they encounter ideological obstacles that militate against the objective to learn productively. On the other hand, lecturers are consumed in the academic monologue, a conventional norm in the academy. What they need to unlearn is monopoly of knowledge and of the academic ownership of the entire process and re-learn collaboration, collectively address problems creatively and co-create solutions.

As hyperconnected individuals, students live in a digital bubble. The paradox of hyperconnectivity is that it isolates individuals from their signify-

cant others. The implications for university students who are seeking meaning in education is that they need to learn how to navigate this alternate virtual reality. Consequently, the learning has to start with the handlers of the reigns, that is, the teachers and instructors. There is need for re-learning the navigation of virtual spaces for purposes of helping students construct and acquire as much meaning as possible for positive learning outcomes.

What the COVID-19 state of emergency has done in South Africa, and elsewhere in the world, is to prompt government through individual ministries and departments, to introspect and ask critical questions about the status quo, how things are done and what can be done to improve the quality of education, quality of life and health of the population. A quick assessment of the events that immediately unfolded when COVID-19 hit southern African shores indicates that the greatest challenge that COVID-19 has had was on changing how we think, perceive and cognise as a people. Normal day-to-day thinking patterns were transformed into what we term COVID-19 settings and the COVID-19 mode, in which new ways of looking, seeing, listening, hearing, thinking and expressing became the new normal. In true COVID-19 mode, traditional ways of perception were set aside to give way to adoption of new and sustainable ways of interaction. Unlearning of habits and processes had to be done within the blink of a terribly short space of time. In their place, re-learning and baby steps of new definitions, protocols, implications had to be done swiftly. In this case, re-learning was not a choice or alternative, it was an executive survival decision of not only staying afloat but also staying alive.

6 Conclusion

The examination of emoticon uses in learning spaces revealed some profound insights about how humans interact despite the existence of chains and limitations of formality. Essentially, emoticons provide a safe space for the expression of emotion in an otherwise strict and tabooed environment such as academia. The use of emoticons helps interlocutors to introduce a humane and social component in academic interactions as the boundaries between social and academic become temporarily blurred. The findings indicate that emo-ticons are not as frivolous and casual as they may seem. They are evidently expressive and time-saving.

We believe that the findings of this chapter can facilitate the design of inclusive learning tools and contribute to re-learning toolkits, transition team

skillsets, and transition pedagogies. These can together form crisis methodologies that implement the important aspects of student communication needs and strategies, cognitive processing needs that humanise online education and bring it closer to the learner. Just because we are in the age of machines and artificial intelligence, does not mean that student needs and socio-emotional support have become obsolete. We posit a continuous process of embedding and integrating that which works for students into the existing curriculum, before, during and post-crisis.

Now that the immediate rush to migrate online has receded, it is an opportune moment to examine the new status quo and seek opportunities for re-learning new and previously overlooked idiosyncrasies and unimposing features of student engagement and lecturer limitations. Perhaps what we thought we knew about online learning needs to be re-examined to include not only setting up the technical infrastructure but also to re-learn how to foster maximum and effective student engagement for optimal use of online learning resources. We posit that the humanity of emoticons mediates and closes the gap and distance between content, instructor and learner particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic in which humanity has been redefined. Findings from this study can help us reflect on online course facilitation strategies and re-learn effective methods of drawing students in, validating their humanity and identity, while keeping them interested in learning.

6.1 Future Pathways on Re-learning

COVID-19 school closures triggered a ripple effect in higher education forcing all stakeholders to restart, re-strategise, reinvent and indeed re-learn how to navigate the only available space to interact safely without spreading the Corona Virus and jeopardising the lives of many in the process. The only available space; the digital, virtual or online became a safe space for learning interactively and collaboratively. Brick-and-mortar structures have been swiftly replaced by virtual classrooms. In the same manner that the corona virus has been described by the World Health Organization as a novel virus; we perceive the process of migrating hastily and completely in majority of cases to online learning as a novel event in the history of basic and higher education not only in South Africa but globally. Subsequently, all stakeholders involved are not requested to adapt, but are constrained by the meagre spectrum of available choices and compelled to utilise virtual spaces for learning. This

implies experimenting, venturing into unknown learning territories, trying and not being afraid to fail, and taking risks. Previously a preserve for the ICT personnel in departments, faculties and institutional units, navigating learning platforms such as Blackboard and Moodle is now a prerequisite skill for faculty and university instructors as it is the methodology in sync with COVID-19 prevention protocols.

The concept of re-learning is crucial and inevitable. The mere acknowledgement that the future has suddenly become the present implies that numerous awakenings and adjustments need to be forged. Higher education professionals need to deliberately, yet swiftly deploy toolkits through transition teams that can train staff in digital learning. Advances in technology in the education space mean that there is much more to be done online apart from posting material. Teaching in real time, posting pre-recorded material for retrieval at a later date, real time collaboration, discussion, video feeds, utilisation of chat rooms, and virtual assessment, are available online at a cost. Summarily, a direction that institutions were moving towards, at their own pace, dictated by their individual contexts and resource constraints, has been drawn up and cast upon the institutions abruptly in the present. Higher education institutions essentially woke up to find themselves in the future without a global positioning system. Therefore, without strategic learning, unlearning, and re-learning for the sake of survival, much disorientation will be experienced. Targeted re-learning is vital for stakeholders to regain and maintain balance after the initial shock of being plunged in a new context and technological jungle.

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Do Learning Management Systems Live Up to Their Potential in Times of Crisis?

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Abstract

Contact institutions in South Africa have had to move teaching and learning into online spaces in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. While many, if not all, South African universities have some form of learning management system in use, the dependency on such systems increases significantly when that system becomes the lifeline between students and their institutions. Not much research has focused on the potential of learning management system data to inform institutional decision- making. This paper looks into how the Blackboard learning management system at the University of the Free State helped to understand lecturer and students' engagement - or disengagement - with their academic work during COVID-19, and more importantly, how it shaped responses through guiding institutional decision- making. Through this

reflection, we argue for the need to promote Academic Analytic practices in which learning management systems data could play a central role beyond COVID-19. For this to happen, however, there needs to be some effort put in place to promote the uptake and range of use of learning management systems.

Keywords: Learning management systems; blackboard; academic analytics; institutional research; decision-making

1 Introduction

The COVID-19 response is not the first involuntary move to online spaces for universities, and it certainly will not be the last. In the wake of the #FeesMustFall protests in 2016, where many institutions had to resort to online channels to complete the academic year, the sector seems to have been caught off-guard again four years later. As part of the COVID-19 response, the University of the Free State (UFS) and other institutions have been stepping up training and support to help staff and students make optimal use of digital platforms to enable learning and teaching. In addition, research and data analytic efforts to assess the extent of students' access to networks, the internet, devices, and the use of different data sources to inform institutional decisions, have also increased significantly in a very short time. In a country with a prominent digital divide under 'normal' circumstances, embedding technology in educational practices has been struggling to take off for a variety of reasons, and therefore this almost absolute reliance on technology has no doubt been a shock to the system.

In this chapter, we reflect on the role the Blackboard Learning Management System (LMS) at the UFS has played as the primary link between students, their lecturers, classmates, learning content, and the institution during the COVID-19 pandemic. LMS systems have been adopted by the majority of higher education institutions internationally and take on a variety of forms. In essence, an LMS aims to facilitate e-learning, to provide a platform for administrative tasks and to facilitate communication between lecturers, the institution, and students (Klobas & McGill 2010). Research on LMS systems has been dominated by a focus on its adoption by different role-players, with limited recognition of the potential these databases hold to inform institutional decision-making processes. Using a five-stage model of Academic Analytics

developed to guide institutional decision-making, we reflect on our experience with the UFS LMS during the pandemic and argue for the potential of these databases to play a central role in advancing Academic Analytics to guide student success efforts in the South African context.

1.1 Learning Management Systems

In the United States, EDUCAUSE (2018) reports that almost all higher education institutions make use of LMS systems to guide learning. A range of LMS platforms are also used by South African higher education institutions, including Blackboard, Moodle, SharePoint, Sakai, Vula, WebCT, and other self-developed systems (Bagarukayo & Kalema 2015). The attractiveness of an LMS is its ability to integrate a wide range of pedagogical and course administration tools (Croitoru & Dinu 2016). LMS platforms have also evolved to incorporate a range of interactive tools such as blogs, wikis, chat rooms and discussion tools. The main purpose of an LMS is to provide alternative avenues to facilitate learning, hence measuring its effectiveness depends on a variety of influencing factors ranging from institutional support to infrastructure and skills, and ultimately, lecturer and student use.

In assessing staff and student perceptions of the effectiveness of different LMS functions, Holmes & Prieto-Rodriquez (2018) found that the most commonly used functions for both groups were making documents available on the LMS, utilising discussion boards, and uploading recordings of face-to-face lectures. Students also noted documents and recordings of lectures as being the most effective functions of the LMS, while lecturers felt that document sharing and synchronous discussion sessions were the most effective, although less than a quarter of staff had engaged in synchronous discussion sessions. In China, Li, Su & Hu (2019) also found the most used functions (44%) of an LMS for lecturers were creating and distributing course content (including announcements and videos), followed by assessment (22%), and administration (14%), which includes teaching calendars, course reports, etc. The least used functions for the LMS were communication and collaboration (11%) and assignments (8%), which include quizzes, surveys, and homework tasks. Findings in the US point to a stronger focus on content, announcements and assessments, with fewer courses engaging with blogs, wikis, and journals (Machajewski, Steffen, Fuerte & Rivera 2019). Beyond the use of certain LMS functions, studies have also looked into

the usefulness of LMS platforms. For example, introducing a more blended approach to medical education in a Saudi Arabia case led to students appreciating the formative assessments on the LMS platform to prepare them for larger exams (Baig, Gazzaz & Farouq 2020). In an earlier review of literature on the effectiveness of LMS, Zanjani, Nykvist & Shlomo (2013) list five factors critical for optimal and successful engagement with LMS. These include teacher attitude and skills, student attitude and skills, LMS design, learning materials characteristics and the availability and quality of external support.

LMS engagement has been criticised for being too time consuming (Jurado 2012), and too instructor-centric, as it is often seen as a source of one-way communication or distribution of resources (Cochrane & Narayan 2017; Mott & Wiley 2009). Challenges with internet connections, such as slow uploading/downloading or fractured connections, as well as technical issues related to accessing the LMS have also been found to influence students' perceived usefulness of such systems (Juhary 2014). Similar frustrations as well as the challenges associated with general technology adoption in South African higher education, and studies on LMS use in the sector, also highlight some key problems. Sackstein, Coleman and Ndobe (2019) argue that LMSs are not necessarily adapted to developing contexts where challenges such as low technical literacy, multilingualism, and resource deficiencies are commonplace. Therefore, inclusive education in these contexts needs to consider contextual issues in order to take part in the intended benefits of these systems. Other studies highlight a lack of digital competence and comfort among staff, and a rigidity in teaching and learning practices that do not make way for newer, innovative ways of incorporating LMSs into learning (Govender & Govender 2014; Webbstock & Fisher 2016). Further, confirming these findings from a different perspective, Coleman and Mtshazi (2017) found that lecturers' motivations to use LMSs depend on familiarity with the platform, computer self-efficacy, appropriate training to use the LMS, availability of technical support, an interest in learning about the platform, and a general sense of the usefulness and quality of the LMS, all contributed to their engagement with the platform.

Arguably, the greatest concern featuring in LMS research is getting people to adopt technology. Twenty years ago, Eugene & Robert (2000) noted a consistent pattern regarding the acceptance and use of new educational technologies is that almost half of new information systems projects fail on an

annual basis. This trend has continued to inform a body of literature on the motivations underlying technology adoption, and continuation of use (Zanjani, Nykvist & Shlomo 2013). Consequently, a range of theoretical approaches has evolved to explore technology adoption. Two of the most commonly used include the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis 1989) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and use of Technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis & Davis 2003). The TAM highlights the interplay between four constructs determining technology acceptance: the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of technology, attitudes toward using technology, and behavioural intention to use technology. The TAM proposes that if a person finds technology easy to use and sees the usefulness of it, then it would change their attitude towards the technology and result in more use. This seemingly logically deduced model has been used widely in research on LMS adoption (e.g. Alharbi & Drew 2014; Bove & Conklin 2019; Juhary 2014; Li 2011). Similarly, the UTAUT states that four constructs play a significant role in user acceptance and behaviour, including the degree to which an individual believes that using the system will enable job performance, the ease with which a system is used, an individual's perception of the importance of use other important people might have, and the extent to which conditions enable engagement with technology (Coleman & Mtshazi 2017). Beyond technology adoption, a variety of other theories have been used to explore the interactions between users and LMS. Hillmer (2009) helpfully groups these theories by purpose, for example, a set of theories focusing on technology, the environment and the organisation as user; employee interest; organisational or management interest; individual cognitive interest; or strategic organisational interest.

The predominant focus on user experiences and uptake has left some gaps in research on LMSs. Most relevant to the current discussion is the use of LMS data to advance data analytics and support institutional decision-making. The development of data analytics in the field of higher education is opening up avenues for implementing related methodologies, such as data mining. For example, Cerezo, Sanchez-Santillan, Paule-Ruiz & Nunez (2016) used Moodle logs to cluster students' behaviour patterns and correlate with academic achievement. Their method allowed a much more in-depth analysis of students' interactions with the LMS and their academic achievement. The time groups spent on different activities allowed assumptions to be made about the depth of their engagement with tasks, as well as their procrastinating beha-

viours. The importance of peer learning also manifested through forums and other social tasks, contributing to the efficiency of groups' academic performance. However, studies like these are scarce, mainly because the vast amounts of data generated by the LMS are difficult to extract and analyse, and often require specialised data analytic skills for both data extraction, analyses, and interpretation (Machajewski, Steffen, Fuerte & Rivera 2019).

1.2 Academic Analytics and Institutional Research

Data analytics is an overarching term referring to the process of turning raw data into absorbable information. In higher education, two forms of data analytics stand out: Learning Analytics, and Academic Analytics. Long & Siemens (2011) differentiate between the concepts by ascribing Learning Analytics to information that helps institutions understand the learning process, while Academic Analytics is a broader conceptualisation of how institutions use data and information to guide decision-making at different levels and across institutional functions. Both, however, have a strong focus on implementing statistical and predictive methods and technologies to advance student success.

In South Africa, while both of these concepts (Learning Analytics and Academic Analytics) are still in development, contextual priorities such as focusing on students' access and success, have led to a stronger focus on Learning Analytics (e.g., Lemmens & Henn 2016). Of the sparse literature on Learning and Academic Analytics in South Africa, the majority stems from the University of South Africa (UNISA), which, because of its size and distance education orientation, has had to find ways of managing Big Data (Fynn & Adamiak 2018; Prinsloo, Archer, Barnes, Chetty & van Zyl 2015), as well as considering the ethical implications of data analytics at such scale (Fynn 2016; Willis, Slade & Prinsloo 2016). Beyond UNISA, other recent publications on Learning or Academic Analytics focus on developing models for predicting students' academic performance or to guide enrolment planning (Bleazard & Lourens 2015; van der Merwe, Kruger & du Toit 2018), and developing models or frameworks to guide university teachers to support student success (Janse van Vuuren 2020; Leppan, van Niekerk & Botha 2018). In contrast, Ngqulu (2018) reflects on the importance of adopting Learning Analytics in higher education, but also provides some challenges, such as a lack of capacity, infrastructure, monitoring and ethical considerations that hinder its progress-

sion. No literature could be found in the South African context linking LMS and data analytics.

The value of Academic Analytics in particular is reflected in its contribution to institutional decision-making. In South Africa, the disciplinary field of Institutional Research (IR) has only recently been awarded appropriate academic exploration through an edited book, *Institutional Research in South African Higher Education* (Botha & Muller 2016), which provides conceptual links to practices often evolving as the need arises. Such conceptual links are necessary for institutional researchers and data analysts to know why they do what they do. A long-standing foundational conceptualisation of the role of IR and institutional researchers is Patrick Terenzini's (1993) three-tier model of organizational intelligence. The first tier demands *technical or analytics intelligence*. IR needs to contribute to the institution's every-day operational knowledge; for example, how many students are enrolled in certain courses, etc. The second tier, *issues intelligence*, demands contributions to institutional level decisions, including resource allocation, facilities planning, programme and staff evaluations, and requires a deeper understanding of the political undercurrents that influence institutional decisions. Finally, the third tier, *contextual intelligence*, requires an understanding of the institution within the broader sector, and beyond. Thus, guiding institutional decisions with due consideration of the institution's history, mission and vision.

Informing institutional decisions in line with Terenzini's tiers requires more than mere reflection on data based on intuition, experience, or anecdote. It demands scrutiny of facts, implementing a range of statistical methods, and testing possible solutions to challenges faced by institutions. In this sense, Academic Analytics consists of different processes, including 'gathering and organising information' (often from different sources and in different forms), analysing and manipulating data, and using the results to answer questions such as 'why,' 'what can we do about it', or 'what happens if we do *x*' (Campbell & Oblinger 2007: 3). Through developing Academic Analytics, institutions make a conscious effort to implement an evidence-based approach to IR and ultimately inform institutional decisions to advance student success. Campbell & Oblinger (2007) provide a helpful, five-step framework to map Academic Analytics against: capture, report, predict, act, and refine. The first step, *capture*, refers to the process of obtaining data. This seemingly simple task depends on numerous pre-emptive actions pertaining to data governance, data management, data quality, and normalisation of data. During the second step,

report, staff make use of appropriate tools (programmes, software, etc.) and skills to identify patterns and analyses in order to compile reports, which might take form in traditional reporting (tables of data) or dashboards. The third step, *predict*, allows analysts to apply statistical models to the data to inform policy and practice. For example, predicting success rates from high school mathematics scores could influence admissions policy for degrees in natural and agricultural sciences. The fourth step, *act*, embodies the ultimate goal of Academic Analytics – to produce actionable information for the institution to use. The actions taken by the institution based on analytic information might range from making informed decisions to implementing reactive or proactive support structures. There is also a focus on measurement accompanying the action step – to build on the evidence-based institutional culture, to ensure accountability, and to inform the last step in the process. Finally, the last step, *refine*, provides space for reflecting on where processes and outcomes could be enhanced.

Using these steps as a guide, the following section describes how the UFS responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by relying heavily on Blackboard LMS data to guide institutional decision- making. In the last step, we reflect on how these practices could be continued and enhanced under less pressured circumstances.

2 Applying the Five Stages of Academic Analytics

As with other universities in South Africa, the UFS had to move all institutional functions to online spaces in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Two key support structures were put in place for staff and students. For staff, the *#UFSTeachOn* platform focused on providing training and support for lecturers to extract core module outcomes, align teaching and assessment with these outcomes in remote learning formats, and dealing with the realities of students' challenges to engage with their studies during this time. The key lessons learned from a Carnegie-funded evaluative study of the #FeesMustFall experiences provided the foundation for the development of the resources and training material as part of the *#UFSTeachOn* campaign. These lessons include the importance of knowledge of sound pedagogy of online teaching, which formed part of the resources, as well as the importance of training in online assessment design and development, which formed part of the training. As part of the *#UFSTeachOn* campaign the Blackboard *#UFSTeachOn* portal was

launched and supported by webinars. A total of 1409 academics participated in webinars focused on creating learning environments that are student-centred, and delivering learning and teaching for low-tech, remote scenarios. Importantly, this approach took account of the fact that students have limited access to data, networks, and in some cases, devices.

For students, the *#UFSLearnOn* campaign consisted of a series of low-tech, downloadable publications that served to provide information on support structures, contact information for various academic or non-academic services, and strategies to cope with, and effectively engage with the new realities of remote learning. Traditional student support structures, including the Academic Student Tutorial Excellence Programme (A_STEP), Academic Advising, the first-year skills module, student counselling and the careers office all moved their services to Blackboard and other platforms. Parallel to the main support structures, a task team was set up to make sure that no students are left behind.

This extensive and multi-pronged approach has a strong evidence-base. For the majority of these interventions, Blackboard data played a key role to track progress of the *#UFSTeachOn* and *#UFSLearnOn* campaigns to point out blind spots in participation, to inform further investigation, and to guide decisions to initiate interventions where needed most.

2.1 Capture

A strong data-driven approach was implemented to support staff and students. Data sources during COVID-19 included survey data, Blackboard data, PeopleSoft Gradebook data, and institutional demographic data. At the end of March 2020, the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) sent out a survey to students to assess whether they had access to reliable network, internet, and devices from which they could study. Previous work on this, such as the biannual Digital Identity survey, could not provide much information since students were not only off-campus during the lockdown, but spread out across the country, many of them confined to deep rural areas. The Student Access to Devices and Data survey was completed by 13,505 students and revealed that, while 92% of students had access to at least one internet-capable device, the majority of these devices were cell phones, with less than 60% of students owning laptops (CTL 2020).

As with many other institutions, prior to COVID-19 the UFS had not

optimally made use of Blackboard data as a primary source of data analytics – partly because of the capacitation reasons listed earlier by Machajewski *et al.* (2019). In addition, and also as many other institutions, the lack of uptake and use of the full range of tools of the LMS prior to COVID-19 made it a less reliable source of information when compared to other institutional data sources. Thus, with Blackboard's sudden thrust into the role as the primary means of teaching and learning, data analysts had a rich dataset to work from. Data were extracted from the Blackboard server and linked to relevant institutional data to provide deeper insight.

2.2 Report

Moving all face-to-face teaching and learning activities online in a matter of weeks was a daunting task for lecturers and support staff alike. Moreover, the knowledge that many students are not equipped with optimal devices, or do not have adequate access to data, internet or a stable network, necessitated thinking beyond merely doing online lectures or uploading recordings. Weekly reporting on the Blackboard activity of students and staff allowed the CTL, the faculty Teaching and Learning Managers (TLMs), and lecturers to track participation on an individual level. With over 5000 modules on Blackboard, over 2,000 lecturers, and over 40 000 students, making sure that everyone was participating initially seemed like an overwhelming task.
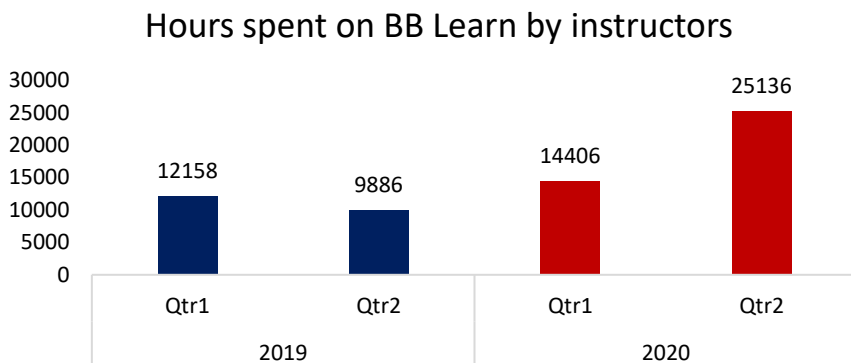
Figure 1: Number of hours spent on Blackboard by lecturers during the first semester in 2019 compared to 2020

The number of modules using Blackboard increased by 15% between 2019 and 2020. In addition, Figure 1 shows a significant increase in the hours lecturers spent on Blackboard during the first semester of 2019 compared to 2020. The number of hours further almost doubles between the first and second quarter of 2020, with lecturers spending over 25 000 hours on the LMS. These hours exclude the time spent on Blackboard Collaborate, which is the main platform for live communication, thereby testifying to the significant effort lecturers put in to get acquainted with the LMS to move all learning online.

Keeping the digital divide in mind from the onset of remote learning preparations, lecturers were guided to develop low-tech approaches to learning and teaching. This included, for example, smaller documentation to download or access, keeping communications regular and clear, but limited to once a week, and implementing more formative-type assessments to gauge students' understanding of the work. Figure 2 shows the number of hours students spent on Blackboard during the first semester of 2019, compared to the same timeframe in 2020.
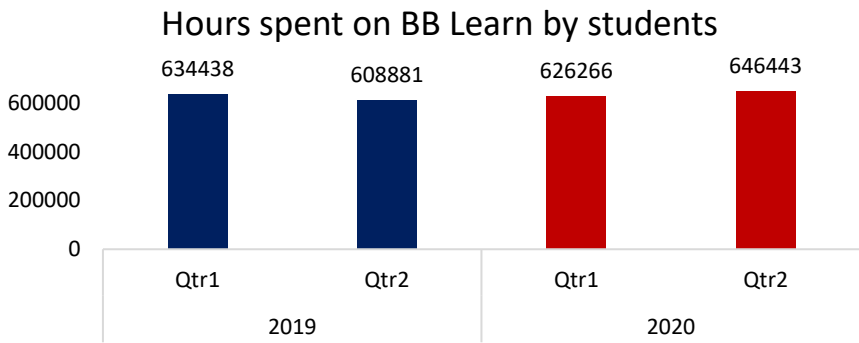
Figure 2: Hours spent on Blackboard by students in the first semesters of 2019 and 2020

While there is a slight increase, of 6% between 2020 and 2019, the objective of keeping interactions with the LMS low-tech to avoid students having to spend a lot of time on the LMS or frequently access it, was reached.

Aligned with literature from national and international studies shared earlier, the most frequently used functions on the LMS relate to a one-way sharing of documentation (Figure 3). However, while this was done

purposefully during 2020 in order to support a low-tech approach to learning, it does not explain the similar trend in 2019.
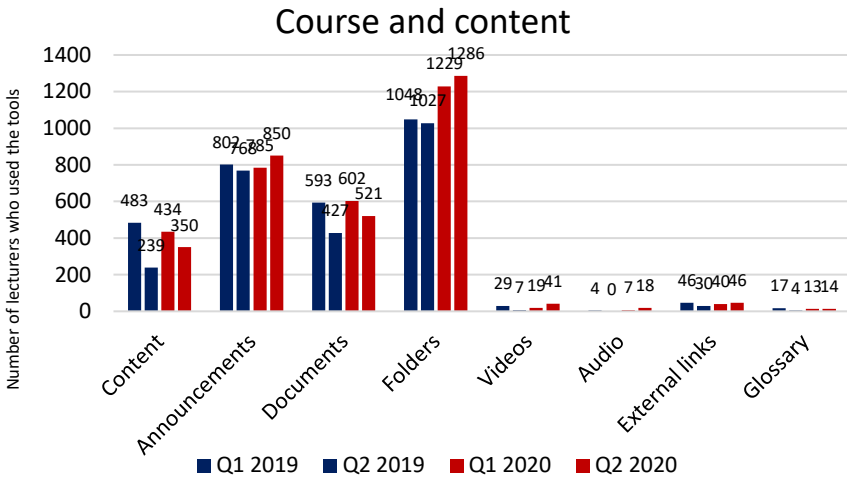
Figure 3: Most and least used functions of the LMS
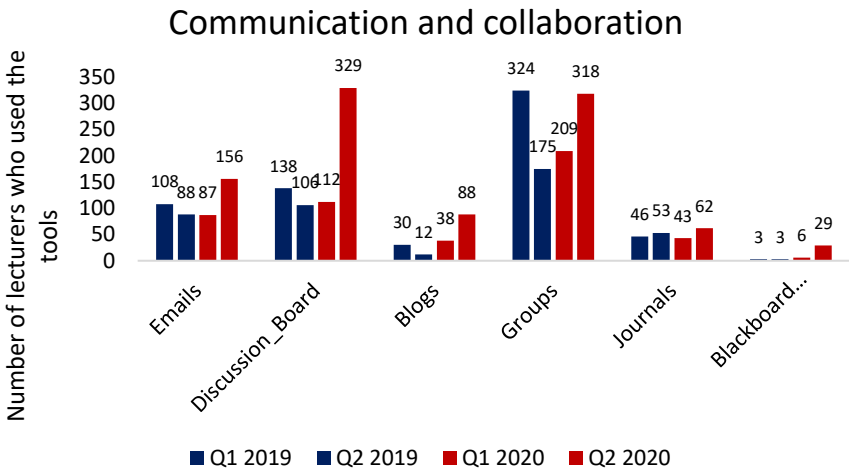
Figure 4: Using the LMS for communication and collaboration

A survey sent out to guide the *#UFSLearnOn* content showed that 96% of students are in contact with their peers via WhatsApp, while around 70% are also using WhatsApp to engage with their lecturers. While there is a significant increase in the use of discussion boards as a communication platform between 2019 and 2020, there are just over 300 lecturers making use of this function. The most used LMS communication platform is forming groups for collaborative learning (Figure 4).

Arguably, the biggest concern of the broader sector during the COVID-19 response is to leave no student behind. Blackboard data allowed the CTL to keep track of students' participation through different means, such as identifying students who had not accessed the LMS, looking into vulnerable students' participation, and identifying students who had not engaged with assessment tasks. As Figures 5 and 6 show, the number of students who did not log on to Blackboard during the transition to remote learning between 20 April and 12 May 2020 were identified and shown here per faculty. In general, the 506 and 331 students from the Bloemfontein and QwaQwa campuses make up 2.5% of the undergraduate student population.

Bloemfontein Undergraduates not active on Blackboard per faculty
N= 506
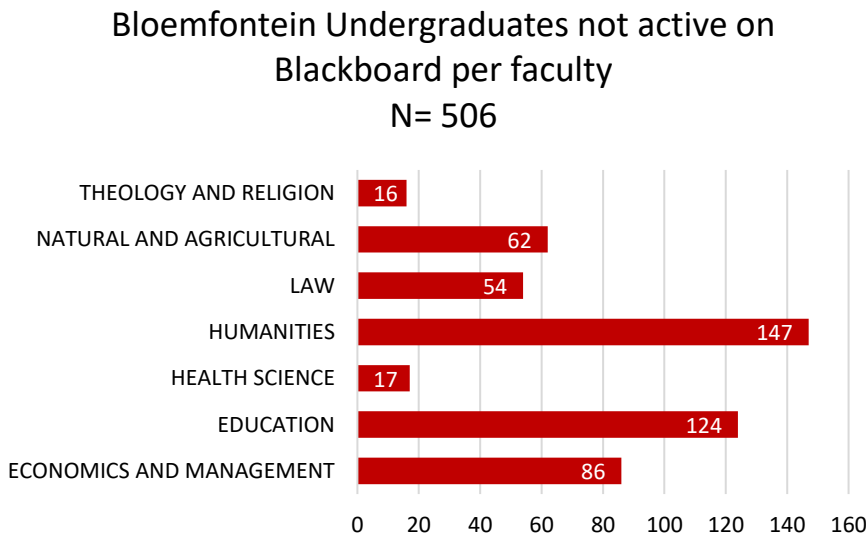
Figure 5: Number of undergraduate students on the Bloemfontein campus who did not log on to Blackboard between 20 April and 12 May 2020 per faculty

QwaQwa campus undergraduates not active on Blackboard per faculty
N= 331
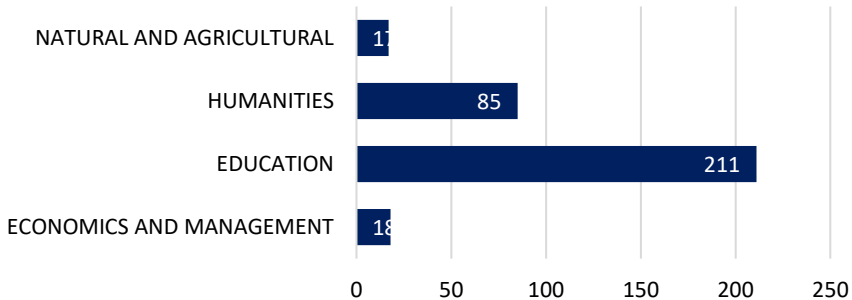
Figure 6: Number of undergraduate students from the QwaQwa campus who had not logged on to Blackboard between 20 April and 12 May 2020 per faculty

Demographics of undergraduate students accessing BB during COVID: NSFAS
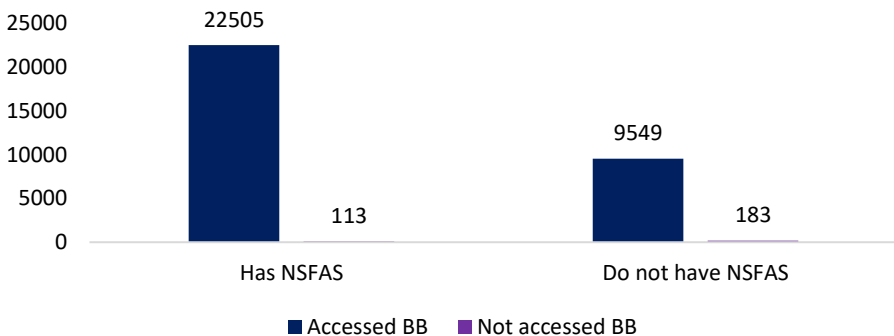
Figure 7: NSFAS students accessing Blackboard

Merging Blackboard data with institutional data also allows an exploration of how vulnerable students are faring. For example, Figures 7 and

8 show that 113 students who receive NSFAS were among the group of students who did not access Blackboard during the transition time. Further, about 1% of students from each quintile school have not accessed Blackboard, with the largest portion being from quintile 3 schools (73 students or 1.23% of students from quintile 3 schools).

Demographics of undergraduate students accessing BB during COVID: Quintiles
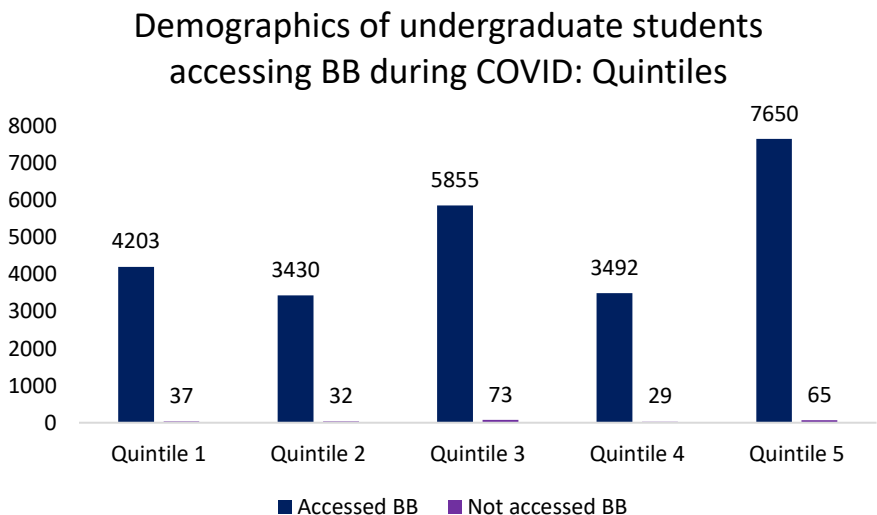
Figure 8: Undergraduate students accessing Blackboard by school quintile

Blackboard data also allows the tracking of assessments. By combining Blackboard assessment data with institutional data, we could distinguish between students who had not made use of relevant Blackboard functions, but had marks allocated to them, as well as students who neither had Blackboard function data, nor marks. Figure 9 shows that during two months of remote learning, 1691 students received marks for assessments they did not access via the LMS. Further investigation showed that lecturers are making other plans to allow students to submit tasks or assignments via email or other platforms, such as WhatsApp.

Merging Blackboard data with institutional assessment data further enabled faculties and TLMs to identify which modules had not recorded any

assessments, as well as allowing the CTL to identify students who had not engaged in any form of assessment during remote learning.
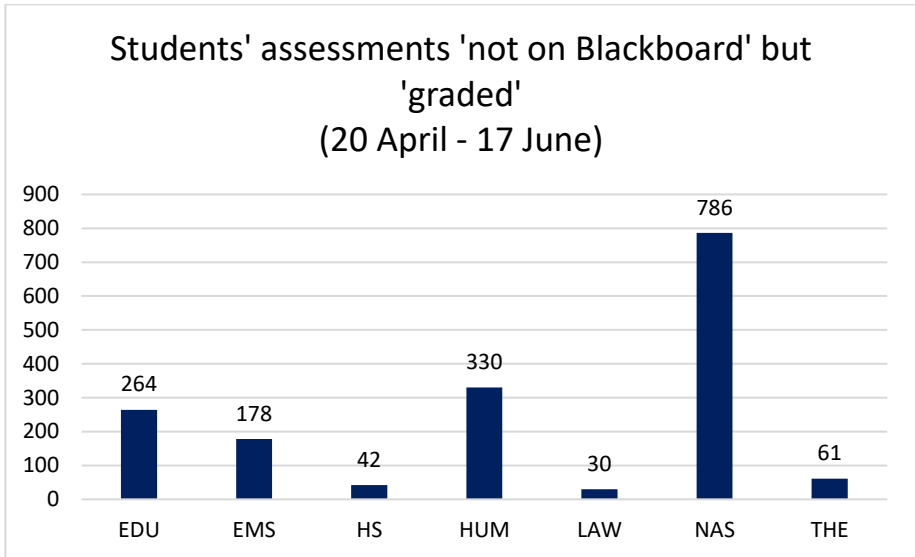
Figure 9: Number of students who did not engage with assessments on the LMS but received marks

2.3 Predict

The work the UFS has done in predictive analytics did not quite prepare the institution for COVID-19. However, conceptual work done during COVID-19, such as the development of the Vulnerability Student Index (VSI), will play an important role in future predictive analytic work. The VSI is based on six criteria ranging from students' school quintile, whether they are recipients of bursaries from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) or receiving Funza Lushaka bursaries, to the status of their undergraduate degree completion. Through this analysis, over 3 000 students that needed help with appropriate devices for learning were identified.

2.4 Act

Identifying students who are not participating in teaching and learning activities was only the first step. An example of one of the interventions that flowed from engagement with Blackboard data is the *No Student Left Behind* initiative, which was developed to engage with the 989 students across three campuses that had been inactive on Blackboard during the transition period 20 April and 12 May 2020. This initiative, coordinated by the Central Academic Advising Office in CTL, entailed mobilising faculty advisors, TLMs, and other trained support staff to contact each student on the list to find out what their challenges were and how the institution could assist. At the time of writing, around a third of students had been reached, 70% of whom had since been able to access Blackboard at least once after the call. Some faculties had also taken their own initiative to identify and contact students who were not active on Blackboard – as tracked through data available to course organisers. As suspected, the majority of students' challenges related to access to devices, difficulties using the application that allows free usage of educational websites, and unstable network or internet connections.

2.5 Refine

Some important lessons learnt during COVID-19 have direct implications for how the UFS, and other institutions, could advance Academic Analytics. First, developing capacity. An evidence-based institutional culture demands analysts who are able to provide information to decision makers that take all three tiers of Terenzini's (1993) IR framework into account. That implies that analysts need to have an in-depth understanding of the educational contexts they are working in and make judgements about what data to present. The capacity of data analysts also includes cross-sectional skill sets. For example, a range of data mining methods could be used to analyse and predict behaviours, including logistic regressions, decision trees, random forests, or neural networks. However, the increasingly complex higher education environments demand increasingly sophisticated methods to meet analytic expectations (Raju & Schumacker 2016).

One of the main reasons why LMS data is underused is a lack of capacity to extract and analyse data (Machajewski *et al.* 2019). This was also the case at the UFS during COVID-19, with analysts attending training in Blackboard analytics while having to report on institutional progress. As a

result, several data analysts occupying different positions in the institution have already signed up for the Blackboard courses.

The second lesson comprises the availability of appropriate tools and infrastructure. Higher education institutions have ever-growing databases that include student and staff demographics as well as student and institutional performance indicators. This also implies that different data systems need to be able to 'talk' to each other, mainly through establishing and implementing a data warehouse that extracts information from scattered information systems into a centralised storage unit, standardises the data, and makes it available for further analyses (Leo Willyanto Santoso 2017). While some South African institutions, as well as the Department of Higher Education and Training,[1] are moving towards data warehousing, these efforts are still in development. In addition, a range of analytic software and other tools to visualise data, track progress, automate processes, or conduct predictive analyses is available to support data analysts as well as to make data more accessible to users. Investing in such tools is vital to advancing an evidence-based culture.

The third and final lesson is that creating a culture of evidence is not an easy process. The intensified reliance on data to guide decisions during COVID-19 compelled all levels of staff to confront anecdotal beliefs and explore the value of data and how to use it. An initial sense of distrust in the data by some was soon replaced by acceptance and actively asking for additional data points.

3   Conclusion

The question posed in the title of this chapter is *Do learning management systems live up to their potential in times of crisis?* To answer this question, one must first recognise the potential of such systems. For the most part, up till now, at the UFS and many other institutions, the use of LMS has been limited to a select few functions, primarily related to sharing content and announcements. However, extracting server data during the pandemic has been an invaluable source of evidence for the UFS to guide decisions and actions, particularly to track progress, identify blind spots for faculties to follow up on, and to inform interventions. The LMS was also the only reliable way in which

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[1] See website for the Higher Education and Training Management Information System https://webapps.dhet.gov.za/

to identify whether vulnerable students were able to transition to remote learning and to keep track of how and whether learning and teaching was taking place. The weekly Blackboard reports showed that the low-tech approach was working, with lecturers spending significantly more time on the platform to prepare and share content, while students' LMS interaction time stayed more or less the same as in 2019. The data also allowed vertical exploration of participation down to individual student level, as well as horizontally merging and cross-referencing data with complementary institutional data to track participation. Most importantly, the data guided action. Knowing who has trouble keeping up with the COVID-19 response has allowed support structures to pin-point their focus to help those in greatest need.

The question is, what happens when lecturers are no longer exclusively dependent on the LMS to facilitate teaching and learning post-COVID-19? While it seems unlikely that everything will merely return to the way it was before COVID-19, we have to consider means to keep lecturers and students engaging with the LMS. This would also imply diversifying its use, as the UFS data corresponds to national and international literature in that the range of functions the platform offers is underused. It might therefore be necessary to revisit technology adoption frameworks such as the TAM or UTAUT, as well as recommendations such as those of Zanjani *et al.* (2013), that focus on developing teacher attitudes and skills, student attitudes and skills, LMS design, learning materials characteristics and the availability and quality of external support to optimise engagement with LMS systems. Promoting the use of the LMS will directly impact the value of the data contribution to Academic and Learning Analytics.

Ultimately, Academic Analytics hold great promise for the higher education sector in South Africa. The development and use of systems that enable data integration, analyses and visualisation make data more accessible to decision makers, which, taken together, enable faster responsiveness and proactive responses to support students and staff.

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From Digital Leap to Epistemic Leap?
The Challenge of Transitioning Two International Doctoral Programmes to an Online Mode of Delivery

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Abstract

This chapter documents the challenges of transitioning two international doctoral programmes in education to an online mode of learning and teaching delivery during the COVID-19 lockdown in the small island, developing country of Mauritius. Previously, the programmes were typically delivered using both online and face-to-face pedagogies to varying degrees at the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE), which is the local partner of two well-established international universities, the University of Brighton (UoB) from the North and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) from the South. The chapter's reflections focus on rapid responsiveness to maintain quality doctoral education within the restrictions of the management of the pandemic. The programmes collectively constitute a case study, with data drawn from observations and reflections of the programme leaders/facilitators at the two institutions, coupled with student feedback for one doctoral cohort. There has been a strong institutional push in all three collaborating institutions to digitise courses, including high-end doctoral programmes, based on the promise of the pedagogical revolution brought about by the increased autonomy, initiative and connectedness afforded by digital spaces. The study found that although the doctoral curriculum and pedagogies were realigned towards more online learning, the expected epistemic shift did not occur. Comparatively, the quality of interactions, which were constructed as being potentially problematic,

proved to be an unexpected area of pedagogical satisfaction, helping to address doctoral students' isolation, anxiety and vulnerabilities. We thus posit that an online environment is not inherently more or less intellectually hospitable than a face-to-face one irrespective of the quality of its resources. Rather, what appears critical is the careful redesign of pedagogy to enable a virtual space to become a learning rather than a teaching space.

1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic left no country unaffected, from the largest nations to the smallest island located in a remote part of the Indian Ocean. Borders were closed and campuses were shut down, but teaching, faculty were told, must continue (Amemado 2020; United Nations 2020). The subsequent deployment of online teaching, and its affordances and limitations, are currently the subject of a growing body of literature from a variety of contexts (Bao 2020; Lerman & Sen 2020). While there is some debate about whether emergency remote teaching can be considered as a bare bone variant of more complex online learning formats (Hodges *et al.* 2020), the experience of even a temporary shift has created opportunities to seek out-of-the-box responses to some of the intractable problems in higher education (HE) related to access and quality.

We contribute to this literature by directing scholarly interest to how postgraduate learning is being reconfigured within lockdown and post-lock-down situations via online teaching. Arguably, learning outcomes for postgraduate studies are qualitatively different in terms of the targeted intellectual habits and dispositions of autonomy and initiative, which represent an additional curricular and pedagogical challenge for the transference of learning and teaching to an online mode (Austin & McDaniels 2006). We examine the affordances and limitations presented by online teaching to enhance doctoral pedagogies based on our experiences of two doctoral programmes delivered via Zoom® and Microsoft Teams® platforms during the lockdown.

The particularity of these programmes is their small island developing state (SIDS) contextual locations and international character, which meant that they already integrated some elements of online engagement. They are run in

collaboration with two universities, namely, the University of Brighton (UoB) and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). As was commonly the case, the COVID-19 induced lockdown presented a significant curricular and pedagogical challenge to the co-ordinators and tutors, who realigned the programme to fit into the technology-mediated learning and teaching space. Beyond the apprehensions typically associated with access, and readiness to teach and learn within this virtual space, we trouble the dominant discourse of technology holding the key to transform teaching and learning at the university (Crawford *et al.* 2020; United Nations 2020). While we are being seduced by the notion that technology offers multiple solutions to perennial issues of access, experience cautions against that technology being propped up and oversold, possibly creating a new set of risks associated with how university learners and teachers construct their role (Bao 2020; Sun & Chen 2016). We further posit that doctoral education (DE), more than undergraduate programmes, provides the litmus test for the real potential of online forms of learning and teaching, because it requires the development of more complex and enduring epistemic relations through an intensive intellectual socialisation process (Amamedo 2014; Austin & McDaniels 2006; Weidman & Stein 2003).

The chapter departs from the traditional approach of using a theoretical framework *a priori* to reading the context. Rather, it takes a practice-led stance in generating fresh understanding of how lived experiences can enhance theoretical views. It is not a-theoretical, but positions the theoretical lens *a posteriori.* The experience is lived, described and subsequently theoretically interpreted in the closing section. We offer a reflective critique drawing from the voices of two programme co-ordinators leading doctoral programmes in COVID times. One co-ordinates both programmes locally, interacting with and mediating the perspectives of two foreign institutions; the other is the pro-gramme leader for one of the external partners. Combining these perspectives offers an insightful transnational reading of how doctoral programmes have been enacted during the pandemic and what insights this experience generates for reimagining DE in post-COVID times.

2 Higher Education in SIDS: Transition to the post-COVID-19 Era

Small island developing states, also known as SIDS, are in a particular categoryof nations which formally entered international discourse in June 1992

at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UN 2019). As a conceptual category in developmental studies, SIDS represents the prototype of a structurally disadvantaged country. Their official recognition drew attention to their inimical triple deficits of vulnerability, remoteness and isolation, and thus garnered support for resilience-building strategies which larger (predominantly Northern) nations provide in the form of direct assistance or through partnerships in mainly climate change management, but also in HE through the provision of postgraduate education (UN 1994).

In the pre-COVID-19 era, HE in SIDS was on the cusp of exciting developments. Many SIDS, including Mauritius, experienced unprecedented local demand for HE on account of its promise of international mobility for graduates and the increasing value assigned to it in terms of personal status and prestige (Jules & Ressler 2019; Mariaye & Samuel 2018). As demand in many contexts outstripped local capacity, national governments pushed to increase places in public HE institutions and to relax regulations on private provision (Motala & Kinser 2016). The twin moves of internationalisation and privatisation were thus strategised by SIDS to leverage change within their HE sectors, making it compatible with the dominant international trends in ways which were reflective of local aspirations (Mariaye & Samuel 2018). In this pursuit, online learning could offer an additional channel to improve HE prospects.

It is not hard to connect the dots as to how SIDS HE, in line with the experience of most countries in the South, will experience the aftermath of the pandemic. Already at a disadvantage in pre-COVID times in terms of resources, capacities and connectedness, access to high-quality postgraduate education is likely to be a scarce luxury given the bleak predictions about post-COVID-19 changes in HE in the North and the dominant countries in the South (Tamrat & Teferra 2020). The risk of a further slide towards low-end providers with a few high-end institutions successfully surviving or even growing through the provision of élite HE to the wealthy, looms large for the sector. Half the private institutions that depend on tuition fees are likely to close as the middle-class experiences income instability in countries like the US (Mohamedbhai 2020). This figure is expected to be much higher in SIDS, resulting in a cooling-off of the aspirations of the majority who will have to be content with provisions delivered in online mode, the quality of which is more often than not, difficult to ascertain. (This argument acknowledges that quality assurance concerns are not the monopoly of online courses.)

While sceptics point to the limited possibility of the transfer of a short-term, quick-fix of online teaching and learning resolving the long-term issues confronting HE, online HE has acquired new legitimacy due to its ability to temporarily allow teaching and learning to continue even in COVID times, as well as the decreased cost and increased variety of courses available through online teaching (Amamedo 2014). A new set of interrogations has emerged regarding the possible fallacies associated with how the COVID-19 pandemic is fast-forwarding digital transitions. In SIDS contexts, these will have to be read with the challenges of digital inclusion which goes beyond connectivity to prepare learners to use the digital leap to produce an epistemic leap (Behari-Leak & Ganas 2020). The concept of a leap involves the idea of a transition occasioned by both internal factors (logic/ reasoning) and external factors (context/ environment) and a significant change or movement. A digital leap is what is currently represented as the necessary and inevitable shift to more online delivery of HE courses, a contextual condition brought about by security, safety, practicality and efficiency concerns. The epistemic leap relates to the deep transformations which enable students to construct a more balanced, self-authoring, autonomous, critical relationship with knowledge and knowing. It is a movement away from a dependent/ compliant/ deferential/ deficit relationship with supervisors and other forms of epistemic authority. It is a leap because it requires as much an internal push as it depends on the creation of learning environments which produce enabling conditions.

2.1 The Place of Doctoral Education (DE) in the SIDS Higher Education Landscape

Doctoral education is central to the mandate of HE and critical to the achievement of the vision of a knowledge society by producing researchers capable of generating original knowledge. It has garnered much attention in the SIDS context as it is the most direct pathway to develop research capacity (Samuel & Mariaye 2014). Mauritius is a good example of the rapid expansion of postgraduate provisions as an offshoot of massification of undergraduate education with a significant knock-on effect on doctoral provisions (Mariaye & Samuel 2020).

In education, the prestige, position and potential for career promotion associated with earning a higher degree exerts no small appeal. This may largely account for the accrued interest in doctoral programmes (Cloete & Bunting

2013). More importantly, the unabashed commercialisation and privatisation of HE, which sets up degrees as products to be purchased, has led to a narrow understanding of what kinds of engagement doctoral learning entails. While it is generally known that doctoral degrees require more financial and time investment on the part of the candidate, there is an enormous cultural deficit when it comes to the nature of academic engagement required at this level (Weidman & Stein 2003) due to the unbridled marketing of postgraduate courses as commodities or mere stepping stones to career advancement. The most common preoccupation is how quickly this degree can be completed, often with the least inconvenience to the potential candidate. It appears that shortcuts to meet the requirements of even a Masters degree have been found, used and transmitted to successive cohorts of students in some cases, some-times with the connivance of faculty keen on churning out numbers to support their own career aspirations. Concomitantly, HE institutions become all too enthusiastic about producing a quantitative track record of successful postgraduate completions as part of their marketing strategies for subsequent recruitment campaigns (TEC 2013). As successful Masters students transit to doctoral education, they carry these attributes and expectations into doctoral programmes.

Mauritian HE has also become a hostage of the shopping syndrome and the performativity cultures which it embraced as an implicit part of the 'becoming a Knowledge Hub' package (Republic of Mauritius 2006). Perceptions and conceptions of DE have mutated to reflect these influences. Entry requirements for doctoral courses have been relaxed and universities have recruited beyond their supervisory capacity or hired contractual supervisors with dubious research and publication profiles, with a ripple effect on the quality of theses produced (TEC 2013). These factors have coalesced to produce a set of expectations about doctoral learning which does not match the actual requirements for success, resulting in less than 50% completion rates in the best-case scenario. Because of the labour-intensive nature of DE in terms of supervisory support and mentoring, substantial institutional resources are required to develop organisational structures and practices which support excellent, open, integrative and inclusive research environments. These include transparent rules and procedures, and up-to-date research and documentation resources, as well as mechanisms for the professional development of both supervisors and doctoral candidates (Blessinger 2016). The economics of DE is characterised by low returns on institutional investments unless institutions identify cost reduction strategies such as integrating online learning into the

delivery of doctoral programmes (Mariaye & Samuel 2018).

The attraction of a blended or fully online model lies in its pull factor for students. They tend to value the safety and certainty of their home environments, and of the online space, which generates less social pressure and fewer demands. Students resort to a relatively protected environment sheltered by a camera which can be turned on and off as required. However, sound online education carefully crafted by competent instructional designers has not made sufficient inroads into the strategic planning documents or practices of local HE institutions. Local research evidence on online learning has been sparse and limited to small-scale practitioner evidence generated through a growing corpus of micro survey research 'evidence', where school and HE practitioners assess themselves in relation to the effectiveness of their technology-enhanced practices predominantly at undergraduate levels. This chapter addresses this gap by offering insights into the quality of doctoral pedagogy using an online pedagogical mode. It foregrounds the need to simultaneously develop the teaching and learning engagements and contributes to debates on whether these new modes of pedagogy indeed activate the levels of high-order attributes of DE required at this apex qualification in HE.

2.2 The Nature and Purpose of Doctoral Education
Blessinger (2016: 2) claims that,

> … doctoral education is a rigorous form of advanced academic apprenticeship and learning. The central aim of any doctoral programme is to immerse and inculcate the student into the respective community of academic scholars and professional practitioners.

Doctoral work involves intellectual work for which the thesis is the main form of evidence that the candidate has mastered the requisite subject knowledge and experience (Brook *et al.* 2010). This subject knowledge is mainly acquired through self-inquiry and study guided by academic mentors. However, participants are also expected to engage with a range of educational practices such as conferences, seminars and debates to stimulate divergent thinking. Doctoral education teaching ought to include pathways to support a more layered, complex and increasingly interdisciplinary understanding of the phenomenon at hand (Nerad & Evans 2018).

At the core of DE in any discipline, lies the deep epistemic and personal transformation of the self that is effected through the process of creating new knowledge and ideas (Brook *et al.* 2010). The view that the only one who is transformed by the doctoral enterprise is the candidate in terms of worldviews, relationship with knowledge and knowing and values, is not just a frequent provocative comment made by supervisors. It is expected that doctoral curricula activate a fundamental shift in the candidate's position as a learner manifested through increased initiative, autonomy, creativity and independence of thought (constituting a dispositions-oriented shift). These are mediated through the development of the specific disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge, competence, and methodologies (including a skills-based component) associated with the completion of a major piece of research.

From a student development perspective, DE ought to include components which will affect the areas of cognitive-structural, psychosocial and social identity development. Chickering (in Weidman & Stein 2003) identified seven vectors to reflect students' developmental work which can be extended to their learning in HE. They are:

1. Achieving competence in intellectual areas and interpersonal relationships.
2. Managing emotions, such as learning to control negative emotions in life.
3. Moving through autonomy towards interdependence, or the ability to overcome the need for constant reassurance from authority figures, and movement from being independent to being a part of a broader community.
4. Developing mature interpersonal relationships, or generating awareness of and respect for differences in ideas and people.
5. Establishing identity, as well as a feeling of self-esteem and stability.
6. Developing purpose, including answering questions such as 'Who am I?' and 'Who am I going to be?' with intentionality in terms of vocational aspirations.
7. Developing integrity, or clarification and rebalancing of personal values and beliefs.

All seven vectors apply to DE and its pedagogy. The challenge and support that DE offers determine how successfully these developmental goals are attained. The question, therefore, is the extent to which online pedagogical modes of delivery of DE indeed activate this range of doctoral graduate targeted attributes and vectors.

3 Two Doctoral Programmes unfold during the COVID-19 Lockdown

The two doctoral programmes examined have the particularity of having integrated some forms of online learning since inception, given their internationalisation and 'at home' nature (students do not move from their home country). As in most universities, materials are accessed online and interactions are mediated by interactive platforms such as Skype. However, the intensive face-to-face block teaching sessions had to be fully delivered in an online mode.

3.1 Overview of Doctoral Programmes

The case studies brought under the lens in this chapter are two foreign doctoral programmes run in partnership with a local institution. They belong to the Doctoral College of the UoB (United Kingdom) and the School of Education at UKZN (South Africa). respectively. They are hosted within the Higher Studies Cell of the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) which technically plays the role of a Graduate School. The UoB offers a Professional Doctorate in Education (Ed.D.) over a minimum period of six years in part-time mode while UKZN's programme is a traditional PhD in education in full-time mode over three years. The second programme allows for candidates to shift to a part-time mode after the minimum enrolment period. The Ed.D. comprises taught components and a dissertation, while the PhD is by thesis only. Both are delivered through a cohort model on a split mode. They draw on the resources and input of both the local and the international partners with the candidate interacting with other supervisors and peers in a collaborative learning space. The candidates also interact outside the cohort seminar-led programme with a smaller team of supervisors, one from the parent and the other from the local host institution. Table 1 shows the structures of the programmes.

Table 1: Overview of two doctoral programmes offered in partnership by the Mauritius Institute of Education

	Professional Doctorate in Education (Ed.D.)	Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Programme/ model	Structured curriculum with taught components and coursework in a two-stage programme	Tried and tested model of doctoral learning based on weekend seminars

Supervisory arrangements	Joint supervision with a main and a local supervisor	Joint supervision
Delivery Mode	Dual-mode involving face-to-face inputs and online teaching and learning	Dual-mode involving face-to-face inputs and online teaching and learning
Assessment	Dissertation and Viva	Dissertation only

The UKZN doctoral programme is run through a cohort seminar model with inputs provided by facilitators over a weekend from a Friday evening until Sunday afternoon for three years. Four to six cohort seminars are held annually targeting critical phases in the doctoral learning journey from research proposal design, to fieldwork and analysis, and documenting the thesis report. Alongside the initiating doctoral seminar programme, candidates are supported by pairs of supervisors from MIE and UKZN in one-on-one supervision dyads usually managed through online email communication. Their progress is administratively supervised by facilitators who hold monitoring meetings which are mandatory for all students registered through MIE.

The Ed.D. programme is run in block intensive teaching sessions for two weeks in April, July and December. The teaching sessions are crafted around the modules designed to develop skills to review the literature, design the research from different methodological perspectives and analyse the data.

3.2 Moving Doctoral Programmes into an Online Teaching Mode during COVID-19

From 20 March 2020, Mauritius was in confinement for an initial period of 15 days (Republic of Mauritius 2020). The UK and South Africa were placed on similar lockdown on 23 and 27 March, respectively (World Health Organisation 2020). Given the experience of countries like China and Italy, the prospects for a return to normal conditions within the foreseeable future were dim. Higher education courses were to continue in online forms with educational activities carried out through mediums such as Zoom® and Microsoft Teams®, and staff working from home.

We describe the experience across the two programmes based on an *a posteriori* reflection on how the stages of curriculum design and engagement

unfolded. Although there were specificities to each (depending on the programme structure, staff expertise, the number of students, and the stages of students' progress in their doctoral journeys), the curriculum responsiveness of mainly the academic teaching staff could be considered as directing the new pedagogical strategies within the context of the pandemic. These are reflected below in the form of four broad stages of curriculum responsiveness. We are aware that a stage-based representation may be narrowly interpreted as linear. Consequently, the designers of the programme acknowledged the need to expand beyond this exclusive preoccupation with a teacher-driven curriculum design mode towards an analysis of what quality of experience of the doctoral journey we were activating amongst students. It is further acknowledged in this reflection that many of the elements of curriculum responsiveness blurred and overlapped over time, practice and experience. In the main, we wished to reflect on the following key points:

1. *How the transition to online teaching was effected, and the challenges faced. (The delivery mode of doctoral education.)*
2. *What these shifts meant for how we constructed doctoral engagement from the perspectives of both students and supervisors. (The goals of doctoral education.)*
3. *What these shifts represent in terms of how power is negotiated across different levels. (The outcomes of doctoral education.)*

We thus interrogate whether the delivery of DE did or should lead to a profound reconsideration of its goals. The outcomes of this transition experience argue for a radical shift from a teaching to a learning orientation in DE. This outlines four stages reflecting a widening sphere of curriculum responsiveness ranging from the institutional situational analytical planning towards an acknowledgement of how the students themselves interpreted the rollout of the curriculum of online pedagogies for the cohort programmes.

4 Four Stages
4.1 Stage 1: Situational Analysis of Programmes within a Context of Policy Alignment

The thinking and planning process for the transfer to online teaching of the doctoral programmes started well before the announcement of the lockdown.

At the beginning of March 2020, the rapid spread of COVID-19 was the precursor to the ban on travel which disallowed any face-to-face input by facilitators. However, as the lockdown took effect locally, it brought an end to any hope of face-to-face interactions at MIE. Because the doctoral programmes operated within three different government policy spaces (Mauritius, the UK and South Africa), their conversion to online modes had to be compliant and aligned to the respective macro policy. It turned out that policies and standpoints adopted by the two partnering universities ran on very similar lines embedded in an expectation of continuity in the conduct of academic affairs.

Chief among the concerns shared across both was students' access to efficient platforms and securing affordable connectivity. One significant advantage which MIE, as the host institution, had over its collaborating partners, was its long-standing strategic interest in online learning. At the inception of the postgraduate programmes in 2007, the adoption of a blended model was a pragmatic choice to connect with its collaborative partners. As a SIDS institution, international connectivities using online technological means were central to sustained cooperation in postgraduate studies. The MIE had thus made considerable headway in investing in technology infrastructure and staff capacity by equipping all staff with laptops and shifting to Microsoft Teams® as an online platform to hold meetings with a relatively large group of people. Although its use had not been optimised prior to the pandemic, it considerably eased anxiety with respect to the Ed.D. programme, as UoB colleagues also had Microsoft Teams® accounts. On registration, students had been assigned MIE email addresses which gave them access to the Microsoft Teams® platform. Apart from being a means to hold meetings and virtual classes, this platform allowed for a range of possibilities in terms of uploading files, YouTube videos, monitoring student attendance, and organising students into sub-groups for small group discussion. It offered a complete pedagogical package which allowed for various forms of interaction in an online mode, coupled with a range of possibilities for online learning. When the pandemic struck, UKZN chose to use Zoom® and afforded facilitators an unlimited package to allow for meetings of extended duration. The reading materials were sent to students by email, which was already the standard method of communication prior to the lockdown. In practice, the COVID-19 context accentuated the more deliberative integration of technological modes of interaction within the seminars themselves, rather than them being confined to post-and in-between seminar activities. Whilst often professing a preference

for direct, face-to-face modes of negotiating one-on-one supervision, students and staff had become increasingly acclimatised to a growing culture of engaging the doctoral journey through online pedagogical strategies. In some cases, students chose to supplement the online modes with direct on-site visits to the host institutions in South Africa and the UK, to more concertedly absorb the cultural ethos of DE in a foreign context.

A situational assessment followed the official go-ahead. Co-ordinators examined the programmatic requirements in terms of the knowledge and skills to be developed and the tasks to be accomplished by students as evidence of having met the learning outcomes and the assessment criteria. What had to be ascertained, was the degree of flexibility afforded by the curriculum which was to be delivered in the intensive sessions or cohort seminars via an online mode. Emergency planning meetings were organised by co-ordinators to initially take stock of the requirements of the situation in terms of the learning of doctoral candidates, programmatic requirements, technological resources and the readiness of students and tutors. Besides the taught inputs, broader issues pertaining to the management of fieldwork during lockdown also had to be addressed. The key concern revolved around whether the former models of curriculum delivery and learning outcomes could be adequately delivered exclusively via the alternative online pedagogy. The only option was to try to walk the road of an alternative.

The outcomes of these deliberations led the programme leaders to kickstart the process of redesigning the programme for the cohort seminar. The UKZN programme chose to maintain its plenary seminar format with a new variant of some input from supervisors based both locally and abroad. Further written outputs were expected to be produced by students during the seminar itself, which could then be harvested into plenary discussions. The UoB programme ran over a more extended period, dispersing programme interventions over time rather than the compressed intensive blocks. The programme leaders saw this as an opportunity for more reading space between the meetings.

4.2 Stage 2: Resource Identification to Ease Curricular Conversion

The shift to online teaching demands careful consideration of the materials to be used to engage students in their home environment since they would not have face-to-face access to peers. Resource identification for the different

topics and themes was carried out drawing from existing online resources already available within the online institutional libraries, available stock of open access resources in the form YouTube videos, podcasts, and recordings of academic events such as seminars and conferences. These were assessed for their relevance to the curriculum of DE in terms of level.

While 'ready to use' or 'ready to convert' materials were not available for every session, the facilitators had sufficient experience, skills and confidence to design some teaching resources from scratch, especially using PowerPoint Presentations which would assist in plenary meetings. These became additional resources created within the exceptional context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which would become permanently available as online resources upload on the institutional websites. Facilitators for the Ed.D. programme created fresh presentations for online teaching in plenary sessions while the UKZN programme lead converted seminar presentations available on YouTube into a resource for teaching the module on a literature review. A repository of online video resources has been curated within the University and UKZN's Teaching Learning Online Portal[1].

4.3 Stage 3: Activating a Doctoral Pedagogy in an Online Learning and Teaching Environment

The most critical stage was to effect the required transition to produce a doctoral learning experience which reflects the kinds of interactive horizontal pedagogy that is typically deployed in the face-to-face mode. Generating the same degree of student engagement was a challenge we took on in both pro-grammes knowing full well the exploratory nature of our shared pedagogical journey. For one, a programmatic delivery move was to introduce collaborative teaching for the plenary session, adding an element of variety in style, content and presentation. The feature of dialogue among tutors was intended to provide a model which students would be required to emulate either in conversation with tutors, but more so, we hoped, among themselves. We understood such multi-level interactivity to be characteristic of doctoral pedagogy enacted within a virtual space.

The decision for the other programme was to move to a flipped class-room pedagogy with course materials being introduced outside the classroom

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[1] http://utlo.ukzn.ac.za/utop.aspx

space before the session (McLaughlin *et al.* 2014). The intention was to create more space for student discussion in peer groups which may or may not be tutor-mediated. This was a considered decision with attendant pedagogical risk to give more power and autonomy to students. Cohort meetings represent an organisational challenge given their compressed nature which usually produce highly structured and organised models of doctoral learning, where all aspects of the programme are decided collaboratively and predominantly by tutors. Assigning an increased measure of autonomy to students also implied that tutors had to be comfortable relinquishing some control of the direction of classroom discussion and at times being comfortable moderating the discussion rather than leading it.

　　Such a move may appear to be 'something that we normally do' or tacitly accepted as a given for tutors in the field of education. Yet our professed pedagogical expertise also means that we grow comfortable in the routine and habit of assuming that we know how students would negotiate their understanding of a concept or an issue. While we often operate in a 'reflection in action mode' within the immediate classroom context, planning online teaching involved 'reflection on action' requiring facilitators to make explicit their values, beliefs, and worldviews about knowledge and how these were to be negotiated in a doctoral programme.

　　The additional change we brought about was to require students to put together a reflective account of what they had discussed with their supervisors and how this feedback would be integrated into their cohort learning and their research work. This level of synthetic engagement was set as a central learning outcome.

4.4 Stage 4: Student Engagement with a Doctoral Curriculum in Online Learning and Teaching Mode

In this section, our reflections are based on only the UKZN doctoral programme. The student experience of the professional doctorate is currently being documented through an independent research project.

4.4.1 Isolation and Anxiety of Doctoral Students: The Virtual Antidote

Any reservations which facilitators may have harboured regarding online

attendance were quickly dissipated during the first session. The internet connection was of appreciable quality, given government instructions to the primary provider to increase connectivity speed without any added cost to users. For the most common package used, the increase in speed was from 10 MB to 20 MB. The high internet penetration of 80% on the island did much to mitigate the risk of programmatic isolation for students. There was, however, one exception who chose to self-isolate due to lack of confidence in the security conditions offered by Zoom®. Because all the students are working teachers and education professionals who are self-financed, the differential access to teaching caused by inability to purchase highly-priced internet connection packages that was experienced in primary and secondary education, was not an issue. Given this privilege, most students welcomed the opportunity to connect with the cohort and to mitigate the uncertainty that the lockdown created regarding their data production activities.

The online teaching experience spanned three days for the UKZN programme and registered 95% attendance for both local tutors and students. Comparatively, the online attendance rates were higher than the face-to-face attendance for both plenary and breakaway sessions on Zoom®. While there were some minor technical glitches relating to connectivity and operating on the platform, the online classes were held as per the proposed programme.

The transfer to an online mode of programme delivery went a long way in ending the isolation of doctoral students who connected again with a community of peers. While they remained connected throughout their journey through their own private WhatsApp groups, being in a formal space supported by facilitators and supervisors who could provide answers to many of their questions regarding the continuity of the doctoral journey, assuaged their anxiety.

4.4.2 The Nature of Online Interactions: Operational vs Conceptual Vulnerabilities

Given the questions and comments by students, the sessions spilt over the allocated time. Online conversations were well balanced with students predominantly occupying the space either voluntarily or when solicited by the facilitators, who ensured that all students were asked to express their views. The resource used to trigger debate was a YouTube seminar presentation on the literature review, which the students had to view and use to develop their

literature review chapters. While a few referred to specific concepts and ideas discussed and the metaphor used in the online resource, the majority could not articulate a stance which was personalised, or specific enough to provide evidence that key concepts were understood and ploughed back in advancing their conceptual understanding of the purposes of a literature review and the processes involved in building a literature-embedded argument. The pedagogical appeal of a resource which overcame the traditional weakness of a 'reading' resource as suiting only one learning style, proved inadequate in evoking a more epistemically committed response. Their reflections indicated shallow conceptual and theoretical engagement. Resources, whether in written or multimedia form, were primarily processed as sources of information which needed to be immediately applicable.

While students did not articulate any sign of being aware of their epistemic vulnerability as evidenced, they expressed their concerns about fieldwork and ethics, and alternative online methodologies for gathering data dominated students' queries. Priorities tended to reside within the realm of the operational dimensions of 'doing the study' rather than the kinds of knowledges (their epistemic propositional content) carved through the pandemic context that they were likely to confront. The nature of this perceived vulnerability was quickly overcome by familiarising students with the ethical clearance processes to be completed online and by allowing them to develop their autonomy in seeking, using and acting on e-information for administrative purposes. Developing this particular aspect of doctoral students' autonomy and initiative has been a challenge.

However, the experience during the lockdown proved to be different if the swift response to instructions by a large majority of students is any indication. In coping with their uncertainties about sustaining their studies under COVID-19 times, the students' preoccupation with prag-matic matters initially trumped the philosophical dimensions. The pedagogical challenges for the facilitators were about how to shift the discourses from the operational to the conceptual endeavours of doctoral studies. The seminar became a journey of releasing inhibitions. The 'coerced' pedagogy of online teaching and learning thus became a means to activate a more concerted effort to elevate the discourse about the purposes of doctoral studies.

Supervisors in the seminar were relatively uninhibited in their interactions. The MIE supervisors had, for the most part, been holding regular online classes via the Microsoft Teams® platform as part of their engagement

with undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The fact that the programme was designed to integrate one supervisory session to be fed back into the proceedings created a space for alternative voices to be included within the experience. Alternating plenary, supervisory and small group discussions worked effectively from the perspective of students who could develop an immediate conversation with supervisors about an identified issue. Moving from the more public space of the plenary when perspectives are more generalised to the more personalised discussion of the small group appeared to have worked well as evidenced by students' focused input in the plenary session.

4.4.3 What Doctoral Students Seek? Certainty, Autonomy and Initiative

Feedback on the online learning experience for students came by way of individual responses communicated to the programme administrator by email. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, all identifying features was removed from the submissions before being forwarded to the programme co-ordinators. Summatively, the student experience focused on the convenience of the online teaching, possibly seeing this format as becoming the new 'normal'. Students' comments spanned every aspect of the pedagogy used, with positive ones focusing on the space provided to articulate issues, and the variety of inputs from a range of perspectives from facilitators and supervisors, as well as the learning resource proposed in the form of a YouTube video.

Even though learning and teaching were transferred in an online mode, the students' feedback remained generically appreciative of the 'richness' of the debate, the multi-perspectival nature of comments by supervisors and the realisation of how much more investment they need to make in terms of time and effort. They predictably appreciated the convenience of online teaching, and the quality of inputs by facilitators when these provided clear answers to their questions which for the most part related to operational issues in terms of 'how-to' rather than 'why'.

While the compulsion to use technology in more creative ways enhanced students' managerial autonomy, it did not fundamentally trigger a change in the ways in which they position themselves in relation to knowledge and knowing. The resource used for the flipped class offered additional audiovisual stimulation and more possibilities in terms of bringing together

complex ideas in an analytic and synthetic way. Nevertheless, students' intellecttual reflexes rarely reached a level beyond the mundane cursory curation of information which could be immediately useful. Because they privileged questions which had, according to them, a closed-ended response and which originated from an immediate problem they faced, their sense of autonomy and initiative was not challenged.

5   What Do These Shifts Mean for How We Construct Doctoral Engagement in an Online Mode?

The emergency shift to online teaching in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic will have a number of repercussions for how universities choose to manage the twin concerns of efficiency and performativity. Arguably, there may be a move to co-opt online teaching to satisfy universities' commercial appetites and sustain the existing business model, but management still needs to get around staff resistance to seeing online teaching as a sustainable pedagogical option. Putting classes on Zoom® is not an indication that transformation has occurred. There may be a host of reasons why peaks in attendance were registered. Firstly, confinement meant that students were available. Secondly, confinement generated anxieties around the completion of doctoral work, which made the opportunity to connect with a community welcome. Thirdly, curiosity about participating in a new learning environment which is also convenient, may account for some accrued interest. Caution should be exercised in using these indicators as proxies for the success of online teaching.

While supervisors may have shared some of these reasons for engagement in an online mode, there was added curiosity about how teaching could be deployed and what new roles they needed to assume in an online mode. Easier accessibility to students and the appeal of connecting in a more personal way with them are possibly added motivation. It appeared that human interactivity, an aspect of online teaching which evoked the most substantial reservation among supervisors, became a source of appreciative surprise. Online interaction between students and supervisors was reported as being less formal, affording a degree of connectedness and intimacy which mirrors the quality of face-to-face interaction. The convenience of supervisor and student setting up appointments unfettered by organisational constraints in terms of times and space, appeared to have gone a long way in producing an adequate level of online engagement.

The key issue which online teaching put to the test was whether it showed a possibility to imagine a different engagement with knowledge and how we relate to others (as in text) and in dialogue in the process of coming to develop meaningful understanding. For DE, such a question is fundamental in guiding programmatic development.

In driving a reflection of the nature of doctoral engagement and how the experience of online teaching triggered deep reviews about how supervisors and facilitators envisage this process, we focus on two overlapping competencies in DE and online learning. The first is intellectual autonomy, and the second is the social nature of knowing and learning. Doctoral education programmes bring both synergistically together by cultivating intellectual hospitality either through supervisory mentoring (constructed as 'thinking with') or by setting up communities of inquiry through cohort models (Austin 2006). According to Dewey (Brook *et al.* 2010), intellectual hospitality is built on intellectual discipline and comprises of 'openness, respect and courage of mind'. These are not only skills which can be 'taught' but dispositions which require some form of personal nurturance and identity work. How do current doctoral programmes factor these 'soft' aspects into their design? How is this associated with enabling students to embrace an approach that appreciates that their thesis is not the only product, and that doctoral learning is a self-transformative journey? The transition to online teaching and the flipped classroom is often misrepresented as a space where students automatically develop those dispositions aided by stimulating learning materials which are somehow expected to generate a miraculous shift (Butcher & Sieminski 2006). Alternately, the assumption is that tutors embrace spontaneously new styles of teaching, abandoning their previous understandings and perspectives because the online learning train has left the station.

Doctoral education programmes would gain much from formalising such identity work through students' writing at the very initial stages of their journey (Brook *et al.* 2010). It may not be writing for thesis production purposes. We have not sufficiently explored how a more open-ended conception of writing at different stages of doctoral study individually, collectively, for creative, argumentative, narrative, disruptive purposes in formal, playful, unabashed ways can support progression in reinventing how students and teachers relate to knowledge and knowing (Aitchison 2009).

More importantly, while intellectual autonomy is a set learning outcome, the methods to achieve this are not an individual project (Mc Alpine

& Asghar 2017). Technology is often misrepresented as serving to create a collegial and shared space for learning by encouraging students to communicate. The assumption that anything which is instructionally designed as a collective task is of an inherently pro-social nature, is a dangerous one. The habits of connecting and relating which are predominant in social media are reductionist rather than expansive; the fact that technology encourages the curation of information for task-based purposes, does not serve the purpose of intellectual hospitality (Butcher & Sieminski 2006). As supervisors already accustomed to practices of establishing intellectual connectedness, there is the risk for us taking these habits for granted. Hence they may slip out of our awareness or generate, in some cases, incomprehension as to why students are not 'naturally' taking to it when they have so many technology-mediated resources at their disposal.

Transiting to online teaching highlights the danger of being seduced by the idea of a flipped classroom relocating responsibility onto students and creating greater awareness of the need for autonomy. Whether in a face-to-face or online mode, doctoral curricula have to assist students in progressively negotiating the social, intellectual space of the class. Students are expected to weave their own stories into the collective (Brook *et al.* 2010; Austin 2006). This issue, which can drive our desire for academic and pedagogical revitalisation, is also inscribed in how power is represented, negotiated and claimed within programmes at individual and institutional level.

6 Designing Doctoral Curricula in Times of Uncertainty in the Post-COVID-19 Era

Dealing with the COVID-19 lockdown situation and the ensuing online teaching was an experiment, which many hope is a short-term measure to ensure the continuity of courses. However, the value of this experience for designers of DE extends well beyond experimentation. The figure below illustrates our interpretation of the experience of running doctoral programmes in an online mode. Based on our observations, conversations with students and supervisors, and written student feedback, we reflect on two competing positions of postgraduate learning in general and doctoral learning in particular.
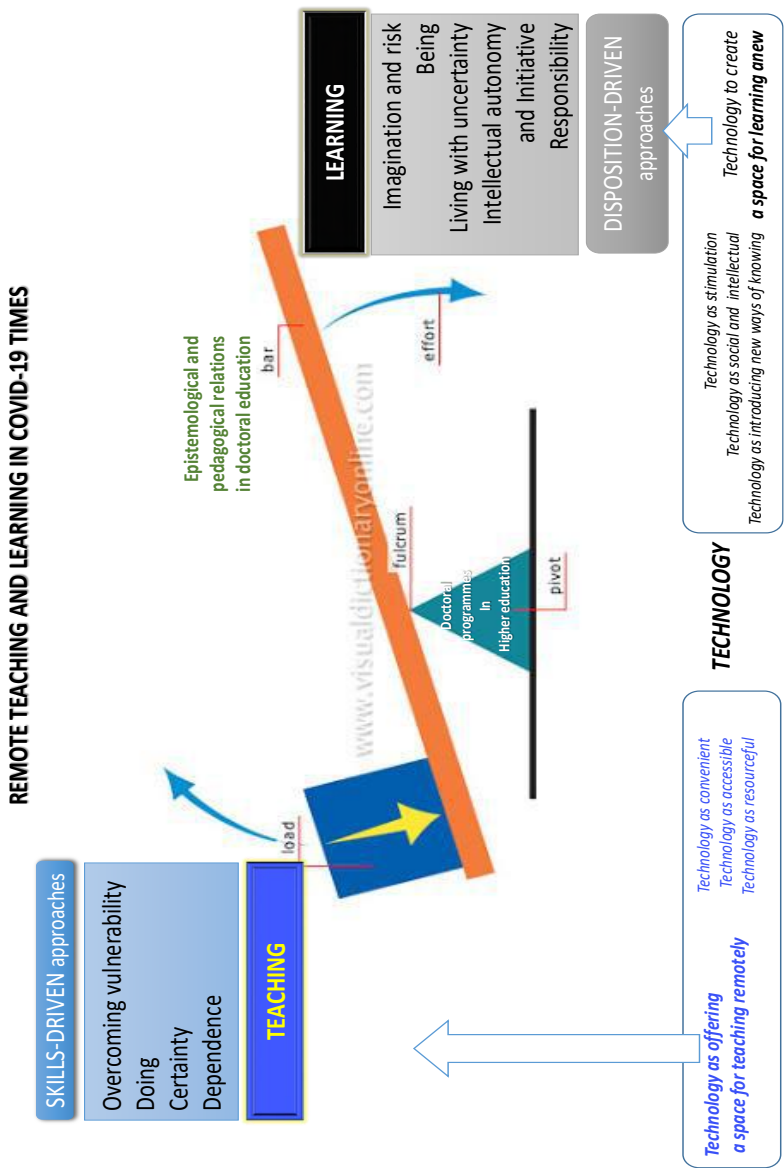
**Figure 1: Online Learning and Teaching in COVID-19 Times –
The Fulcrum Metaphor**

As indicated, we contrast two approaches to DE: a skills-based approach vs a disposition-driven approach. We posit that the triple technology selling points which universities have bought into, namely, access, convenience and a resource-rich learning environment, do little to move the practice of DE towards a disposition-driven approach which seeks to develop autonomy, responsibility, initiative, and comfort with risk and uncertainty.

Figure 1 illustrates that pedagogical and epistemological relations are out of sync because current understandings of online teaching construct it as a space for teaching online when this virtual interactive space is one for learning anew. We draw from the metaphor of a fulcrum/lever to use the idea of pressure, pivot, load and effort as representing the process of realigning the doctoral curriculum in the context of the lockdown.

In this metaphor, the **placement of the fulcrum** is central to the whole process. If the fulcrum is too far away from that which is to be lifted, the advantage of the lever decreases. Similarly, if technology, which has been constructed as the supporting pivot for enacting the doctoral curriculum online, is placed nearer to teaching than to learning (what needs to be lifted), its effectiveness decreases. However, if the fulcrum is displaced towards the right nearer to learning, its effectiveness increases.

Conceptions of how technology can be co-opted in postgraduate education remain entrenched in the belief that refining the performance of teaching translates into better learning. Many postgraduate practices remain front-led by enthusiastic programme leaders who predominantly use PowerPoint modes of communication. The pedagogical belief is that there are spaces for discussion and input by the learners/students. However, this rarely disrupts the notion of the tutor or supervisor as the bringer of almost ready-made knowledge to the table.

What are the dangers to DE if technology is incorporated in delivery programmes without more in-depth consideration of how it can contribute to the seven vectors (as discussed in section 4 above) of student development? Firstly, it will intensify the current quality issues confronting DE even in face-to-face mode (Nerad & Evans 2018) which remain unaddressed. The issues relate to adequate socialisation (Weidman & Stein 2001) into the expectations of being a doctoral student through the creation of adequate curricular experience. Secondly, universities' digital ambitions to transit to dual-mode with a percentage of courses being offered in blended mode, are likely to be precipitated. This expanding repertoire of delivery modes is likely to put

pressure on faculty to become instructional designers for doctoral curriculum. Such re-curriculation responsiveness is often adopted in a fast-tracked mode without the required quality assurance guarantees. Thirdly, superficial adoption of alternative technological pedagogical modes paraded as a form of institutional resilience in the face of adversity may activate a performativity enterprise. Institutions may divert attention towards keeping the figures rolling in terms of doctoral recruitment through the lure of technological connectedness between students and the institutional structures. This may secure enrolment (and possible graduation) numbers to accrue subsequent funding. However, these practices may raise questions about whether DE seminar programmes, including the quality of supervision, indeed create the intellectual habits and personal characteristics required to make a sustainable contribution to research and scholarship.

The kinds of online doctoral curriculum which are now being envisaged in a post-COVID-19 era must integrate a substantial element of digital socialisation with the already existing exigency of scholarly socialisation. This may be formalised in terms of stand-alone modules or collective/individual activities which prospective students must complete before their proposal is accepted (Aitchison 2009). Within programmes, deliberate space must be created to promote collective learning. This space could be predominantly virtual.

7 Conclusion: Post-COVID-19 Prospects for Doctoral Curriculum Designs

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted a reality check of human ambitions for certainty and stability. It has brought into the open several fallacies that hitherto shaped our understanding of the world, one of which is our ability to control our environment. Nevertheless, it has also revealed how initiative, resilience and imagination could be safeguards against despair, anxiety and vulnerability. In repairing our environments, institutions, societies and relationships post-COVID-19, we need more than ever leaders and people with knowledge who can also create new ways of knowing and relating to a world characterised by volatility and vulnerability.

While this remains the fundamental reason why DE came to be, its curriculum designers look to the future with an equal measure of hope and despair. Despair is activated from varied sources: at the turn that HE appears

to have taken, entangled in new conditions of funding, recruitment and accountability to industry (Nerad & Evans 2018); at the declining quality of graduate skills and its ripple effect on postgraduate recruitment and outputs (Cloete & Bunting 2013); at the internal management conflicts which appear to tear HE institutions apart as faculty tries to reconcile competing demands, and at the public outcry against HE in general in the wake of increasing graduate unemployment worldwide (Nerad & Evans 2018).

We are offered technology as a ray of hope to alleviate a number of these systemic issues which have plagued universities for decades. Among these is the sacrifice of teaching quality to faculty's research portfolios. Technology offers possibilities to enhance pedagogy that is already of good quality, but it cannot compensate for poor curricular designs or randomly constructed pedagogies. While sceptics of technology are quick to hold on to this argument, they also over-celebrate the power of face-to-face pedagogy as the sole method of achieving doctorateness, while being unable to produce evidence or solid logical argument to support the view that face-to-face pedagogies indeed activate deep professional growth of doctorateness in ways that online learning cannot. For want of a better one, our standpoint must remain one of openness to the affordances that each mode of pedagogy offers, but this must not be the main preoccupation drawing us away from the real question: what pedagogies, enacted in either virtual or face-to-face modes, improve doctoral student engagement, support skills development (particularly writing), encourage participation in a community of practice, and create the conditions for an epistemic leap to occur? Whether this epistemic leap is to be leveraged through a digital leap, is in our view a very secondary question as, for the moment, the answer is likely to be more ideological than scientific.

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Hybridising Cybergogy and Sense of Place: A Response to Remote Multimodal Teaching and Learning in South African Higher Education

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Abstract

Given that Remote Multimodal Teaching and Learning (RMTL) in Higher Education (HE) acknowledges that students represent different generations, personality types, and learning styles. instructional designers should seek to use multiple approaches, including distance education and online technologies to meet the needs of a broad spectrum of students. In order to successfully implement multimodal models, it is, therefore, paramount to consider what we refer to as students' *sense of splace*. As a multidimensional, complex construct, sense of place is used to define the relationship and connections between people and spatial settings. For most, if not all people, their sense of place has been affected to some degree by the promulgation of the COVID-19 regulations in both the international environment and South Africa. At the same time, the shift to RMTL due to these restrictions has also expedited subconscious changes in students and academics. Changes brought about by RMTL were at psychological, cognitive, social, and emotional levels, as teaching and learning transitioned from the *physical and face-to-face* to the *remote and virtual*. In this chapter, we argue that existing cybergogies could be reinforced by a particular sense of place and could generate a more holistic framework, namely, a *sense of splace*, that may be more useful in improving engaged teaching and learning. *Sense of splace* takes into account our intertwined connections to the real, physical place and the virtual space in which we currently work in higher education under COVID-19 regulations.

Although a sense of splace has now become integral to the teaching and learning environment, it is easily overlooked, under-emphasised, or dismissed, while educators continue to privilege the present curriculum as planned. As a result, teaching and learning have become content-driven, instrumental, and technical. We argue that university educators should re-examine their current cybergogies and be cognisant of students' sense of splace in RMTL.

1 Introduction

A concerted effort under way since 2015 to establish a curriculum in South African higher education that is sensitive to students' cultural contexts, while transitioning beyond the mere replication of physical classroom environments, needs to be critically scrutinised if we are to invoke in students from diverse backgrounds the capacities necessary to function in a 21st-century environment. While the need to prepare students for the world of work has economic implications, the reality is that universities in South Africa continue to function based on the industrial model of education (Le Grange 2016). Although functioning within a developing nation and a democracy, the current higher education system in South Africa continues to conform to a social structure premised on neoliberalism (Maistry 2014). Any predetermined curriculum that fails to take into account the values and needs of students from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, is certain to be contested by students who are marginalised and silenced (Freire 2006). The nationwide #FeesMustFall student protests during the 2015-2016 period served as a vindication of this resistance by a cohort of students who argued for free, quality, decolonised education in South African universities. During the time that student protests were significantly disrupting higher teaching and learning, certain universities resorted to online and blended forms of learning in response to this higher education crisis (Czerniewicz, Trotter & Haupt 2019).

It should be noted that the South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) is acutely aware of the growing influence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) on the provision of distance education (DHET 2014). However, a significant concern exists

around the use of terms such as 'blended learning', 'flexible learning', and 'mixed provisions of learning' that may cover a wide range of possibilities and challenges facing distance education, and these may often be overlooked (DHET 2014). We observe that the South African government has been fairly cautious concerning the use of online learning in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many education researchers and analysts have observed that online learning may be welcomed by students who prefer to enjoy the flexibility of learning without being confined to a classroom (Bernard, Borokhovski, Schmid, Tamim & Abrami 2014; Chigeza & Halbert 2014; Northey, Bucic, Chylinski & Govind 2015; Israel 2015; Potter 2015; Nortvig, Petersen & Balle 2018). However, the reality is that any form of online learning may come across as a learning barrier to the majority of students who are either accustomed to traditional classroom environments or who do not have access to the internet (Mahlangu 2018). We surmise that the South African government adopted the term 'remote multimodal teaching and learning' (RMTL) as a 'neutral', desensitised approach to learning that would appeal to students who oppose what they perceive as dominant forms of online learning. While it may be the South African government's prerogative to expect public universities to ensure that its slogan of 'no student should be left behind', and this may come across as political rhetoric, there are obvious underlying disadvantages attached to this slogan that the reality may come to reveal for universities, students, and university educators.

Despite RMTL having a connection with distance education, a clear distinction exists between such an approach to teaching and learning and what Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust & Bond (2020) call 'emergency remote teaching' (ERT). While distance education programmes and online courses have been designed from the onset, ERT in contrast, is a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternative mode of delivery in response to a crisis (Hodges *et al.* 2020). While a rapid approach towards ERT is perhaps needed to address a crisis in higher education, it may have adverse effects on the quality of the curriculum (Hodges *et al.* 2020). Hence, calls for a universal design for learning is needed in order for curriculum designers of remote learning programmes to develop an enabling environment that is flexible, inclusive, and student-centred (Hodges *et al.* 2020). However, replacing one medium with another, without identifying the purpose and value of such a form of learning, may have the opposite effect on the learning process in terms of quality education for all students.

Furthermore, the use of any teaching and learning approach in response to a crisis that fails to recognise the social, cognitive, emotional, and transactional elements of learning may undermine meaningful learning (Cleveland-Innes & Campbell 2012). Failing to take into account these factors of learning and sense of splace in RMTL, we infer, risks such teaching conforming to the industrial model of education. The idea of establishing a community that transcends the mere transmission of information through multimodal forms of learning, we argue, is needed if such forms of learning are to remain relevant to the context of the current cohort of students in South Africa. However, this would require that university educators take students' sense of splace into consideration during teaching, learning and assessment (Ontong & Waghid 2020). The absence of an RMTL policy further offers many universities the flexibility in determining which resources are suited to their particular context. Of course, this presents residential universities which are unfamiliar with distance learning with distinct multimodal approaches that would most certainly render varying degrees of success or failure. Hence, the need to explore the cognitive, social, emotional, and transactional elements of learning more deeply is an essential point of departure if we are to [re]imagine the pedagogical approach of RMTL as a response to a higher education crisis.

The danger of allowing universities to decide on remote multimodal teaching and learning may lead to teaching that is more instructional than transactional (Bozkurt & Sharma 2020). With the wide selection of traditional paper-based and new technologies available under the guise of RMTL, such autonomy may present educators with further challenges in trying to make sense of and evaluate, the most meaningful and effective teaching and learning strategies in relation to revised programme demands and students' needs. Students as a result of the pandemic are currently finding themselves in unfamiliar integrated physical places and virtual spaces of learning. These have had a direct impact on their cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and social wellbeing (Bozkurt & Sharma 2020). New relationships with their immediate spatial settings (physical and virtual) developed instantaneously with the shift to RMTL. These relationships, also known as a sense of splace, we argue, should be taken into consideration. If not, teaching and learning could become inauthentic, and the planned curriculum 'placeless'. It is, therefore, pivotal that educators rethink their pedagogy and cybergogy, and create conducive opportunities for integrating students' sense of splace with RMTL.

However, despite the fact that a RMTL approach was introduced by

the South African government as an appeal to dominant forms of online learning in higher education, the implementation thereof proved to be rather challenging. One of the main challenges with the implementation of an RMTL approach, besides redesigning curricula and service delivery, we argue, is the absence of a transactional presence. Although various strands of research regarding RMTL have been conducted, we argue that a few pivotal aspects have been overlooked. For example, Roberts (2017) focused on the use of images in teaching and learning, while Costley & Lange (2017) and Lui (2016) investigated the use of audio and video to support student engagement in online learning environments. Guo and colleagues, on the other hand, examined the length of time students took watching streaming videos within four edX MOOCs, analysing results from 6.9 million video-watching sessions (Guo, Kim & Robin 2014). While these research efforts have contributed to our understanding of multimodal learning in higher education, none of them actually looked at the integral notions of sense of place/splace. Place, we argue, has always been implicit in pedagogy, curriculum design, and in education in general, yet the current pandemic has once again highlighted its importance in (remote) teaching and learning. In this chapter, we discuss how existing cybergogies employed by university educators could be strengthened by the integration of *sense of splace*, resulting in a new theoretical framework which could offer more support to lecturers in navigating teaching and learning remotely. The abrupt transition from traditional face- to-face teaching to that of remote teaching, affected university educators differently. Some did not necessarily know where to start in translating the syllabus, course materials, and pedagogy to an online platform. The rationale underpinning this chapter is thus twofold: a) to present a new and more robust theoretical framework for academics that might be useful in preparing them for RMTL, and b) to enhance the development of a transactional presence throughout the process.

Based on this, we explore the theory of cybergogy, and demonstrate how it could generate a renewed holistic framework. In other words, should *sense of splace* be amalgamated with the sense of place concept? This framework, we further argue, could increase student and educator engagement, and boost academic outcomes under RMTL. We draw specifically on the original thoughts of Wang & Kang's (2006) cybergogy framework that explores the cognitive, social, and emotional elements within an engaging online learning environment. Furthermore, we use Ardoin's (2006) and Ardoin, Schuh, & Gould's (2012) notions of sense of place to demonstrate how

elements of this sense of place relate to cybergogy. We further offer an account of integrating a transactional presence by drawing on some aspects of online network learning (ONL) theory. However, instead of an either/or scenario, we suggest that sense of splace as a holistic integrated framework could strengthen ONL theory in RMTL practices, and *vice versa*. In conclusion, we propose that the new cybergogical theoretical framework (sense of splace) may be useful in assisting university educators in addressing the challenges they face as a result of a higher education crisis, and we offer a few guidelines for using this framework.

2 South Africa's Remote Multimodal Teaching and Learning Response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Distance education continues to play a significant role in South Africa by affording access to education to a large cohort of students from distinct back-grounds. The South African *White Paper on Education and Training* (1995:70) is descriptive concerning the range of multimodal methods to teaching and learning. These include the use of study guides, videos, computers, news-papers, audio-cassettes, experimentation kits, broadcasting, charts, and re-source packs, coupled with student support services, all of which are intended to ensure all students are provided with access to education. Of course, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, these methods have transformed in line with the status quo concerning the available technologies. The idea of the unit and cost-benefit factors in line with RMTL has meant that such methods remain favourable within the South African higher education context.

In the past, print-based learning packages formed the core method under distance education. Michael Moore (1972:76) in the early seventies, described distance education as:

> … the family of instructional methods in which the teaching behaviors are executed apart from the learning behaviors … so that communication between the learner and the teacher must be facilitated by print, electronic, mechanical or other device.

However, the physical absence of the educator who would be available for diagnosing any misconceptions meant that students had little spaces to receive corrective feedback (Garrison 2015). Instead, 'feedback' usually came

in the form of an examination to determine whether students would progress or fail. This one-directional approach to teaching, and the use of one form of summative assessment as a feedback mechanism meant that distance education at the time followed the industrial model of education (Garrison 2015).

The South African Department for Higher Education and Training's (DHET) *Policy for the Provision of Distance Education in South African Universities in the Context of an Integrated Post-school System* (2014) provides a statement for the provision and expansion of quality distance education at higher education institutions in South Africa. The policy in its overview of the higher education context in South Africa is fairly detailed, highlighting the rationale for distance education and the mechanisms needed for cultivating an enabling environment for quality distance education (DHET 2014). It acknowledges the need for student engagement, through ICT in South Africa, to supplement existing RMTL practices. This is based on the assumption concerning its affordability and availability to them (DHET 2014). It is expected of universities to plan course designs through having increased support systems in place to assist underprepared students who have no experience with distance learning. However, the shift to RMTL at universities presents academics with a challenge concerning their need to select appropriate pedagogies to enhance both spatial and transactional distance (DHET 2014). The policy further acknowledges that distance learning is an appealing and flexible option to mature and mid-career students, including students with disabilities, which, in most instances, makes contact education challenging (DHET 2014). However, for a university student who is unfamiliar with the context of distance learning, significant challenges are presented to them. It becomes an even greater challenge for those students who come from historically disadvantaged communities.

Prior to 2013, the University of South Africa (UNISA) was the only higher education institution amongst the 26 public universities in South Africa that offered distance education. UNISA remains the largest open distance learning institution in the country and in Africa, and is one of the world's top 30 mega-institutions, with close to 400 000 students (UNISA 2018). However, despite the university boasting such a large student population, approximately only 30 000 students graduate annually, a fact which further outlines the many challenges that students experience with distance education (Mittelmeier, Rogaten, Long, Dalu, Gunter & Prinsloo 2019). Significant inequalities among groups of students concerning physical isolation, social community develop-

ment, and access to timely feedback seems to disproportionately hinder many students, particularly those from historically disadvantaged communities with fewer resources (Mittelmeier, Rogaten, Long, Dalu, Gunter & Prinsloo 2019). It is, therefore, in this context, crucial that university educators critically rethink their teaching and learning practices and find innovative ways of providing the necessary support to such students.

The South African government's theme 'Save The Academic Year Save Lives' can therefore be seen as a bold approach towards ameliorating the social ills that have, for decades before the COVID-19 pandemic, plagued the majority of historically disadvantaged students concerning lack of digital access. In 2020, in response to the global pandemic, the DHET in South Africa aimed to provide the most vulnerable and impoverished students who were registered with the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) with the digital devices they needed for RMTL during the lockdown period in the country. The DHET, in collaboration with other state departments, further negotiated with mobile network operators to provide zero-rated educational content sites to all public universities in the country. This meant that access to university websites would be free, although some of the embedded content, such as videos, would incur data costs. The department further provided education data bundles to NSFAS students, including Funza Lushaka bursary students. They would receive a limited amount of data for three months subsidised by the government. While these approaches and intentions are welcomed, all public universities have the autonomy to determine their own detailed strategies concerning RMTL during the lockdown period. The rationale for such an approach was further vindicated by the government's unwillingness to follow a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. Instead, universities were encouraged to develop strategies that would include the delivery of paper-based teaching and learning resources to students who do not have the resources to engage electronically or online.

Letseka & Pitsoe (2014) acknowledge several challenges to distance learning in South Africa that include articulation (theory), learner support, recognition of prior learning, and reduced throughput rate. While these challenges are, of course, significant, and worth exploring, within the scope of this chapter we focus briefly on poorly theorised distance learning. Garrison (2000: 3) claims that theory is described as 'a coherent and systematic ordering of ideas, concepts, and models with the purpose of constructing meaning to explain, interpret and shape practice'. The idea of a theoretical framework may,

therefore, assist educators and researchers in reducing complexity by assisting in predicting emerging trends and how, for instance, effective RMTL can be implemented effectively. This is what Garrison (2015) proposes concerning the value of theory to education institutions in clarifying for them terms such as RMTL, and assisting them in coping with the complexity of establishing learning communities.

Both research and policy literature indicate that the absence of a clear theoretical framework may have significant implications for the implement-tation of RMTL in South Africa. However, those university educators who are detached from the context of RMTL risk implementation of such an approach as a technical reproduction of 'chalk and talk' styles of teaching which would have a significant implication for what Aoki (1987) averred as the student in his/her becoming. A possible way to mitigate this risk is for educators to determine, acknowledge, and embrace their own and their students' sense of splace as a means of enhancing the teaching and learning experience for them. Aoki (1987) further calls for mindfulness of the situation that allows the educator to recognise that application is a hermeneutic act. An educator who is not able to recognise a situation in which students' voices are not heard, will silence students in RMTL. Aoki (1987) argues that application cannot materialise when educators are not able to view the 'rightness' of a situation, and for one to recognise the rightness of a situation would require of one to view the right orientation internally. According to this argument, application of RMTL guided by theory thus requires mindfulness of the situation in order to ameliorate, or rather avoid, the reductionism of instrumentality. Only then would university educators be able to vivify the relationship between the educational technology used and the RMTL situation (Aoki 1987).

3   Towards a Revised Cybergogy for Remote Multimodal Teaching and Learning

Cybergogy is an adapted approach to online teaching and learning within a distance education context (Scopes 2009). A central element of cybergogy is its specific aim to combine central tenets of both andragogy and pedagogy towards reaching a novel approach to learning in a virtual space (Cronin, McMahon & Waldron 2009; Scopes 2009). These authors perceived the bene-fits of good practice concerning cybergogy to include positioning the student at the focus point of the teaching and learning experience, cultivating an engag-

ed learning environment, and in creating spaces for student reflection (Goody & Malone 1999; Laurillard 2002; Carrier & Moulds 2003; Tishman & Palmer 2005; Boettcher 2007; Wang 2007; Cronin, McMahon & Waldron 2009).

Wang and Kang's (2006) original cybergogy framework specifically aims at engaging the learning experiences of distance students, particularly those students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, through activating their cognitive, emotional, and social faculties. Within the context of teaching and learning the cognitive domain points to the factors that initiate students' construction of knowledge. Whereas a curriculum-as-planned, guided by traditional pedagogy, is dependent on the educator for designing a course curriculum and assessment according to students' needs, cybergogy, in contrast, through self-regulated learning, places the students at the central point of their learning. Students, through pedagogical spaces, are therefore afforded autonomy as part of a collaborative process in selecting the learning course, and in designing and developing the curriculum and assessment. Critics may argue that such an approach would not be realised in the context of RMTL. In response to this, one could point to a case where students may feel anxiety, isolation, and confusion, the emotive dimension which is foregrounded on the notion that teaching and learning work best in a classroom environment premised on mutual affection and respect, may address these tense feelings (Wang & Kang 2006).

According to Wang and Kang (2006), under the emotive factor, four underlying conditions are necessary for university educators and their students to function collaboratively: first, the need to cultivate students' competence in terms of being useful in learning valuable things; second, the creation of a respectful and connected learning atmosphere; third, assisting students to develop favourable attitudes toward the learning experience through personal relevance/meaning assigned to them and their life experience, and choice, and lastly, creating challenging and thoughtful learning experiences that are consistent with students' beliefs (Wang & Kang 2006). The framework views the social dimension concerned with those social acts that involve interaction with the self and others (Wang & Kang 2006). One of the critical elements of the social factors is linked to the need to cultivate a community through establishing group identity, trust, interaction, and through constructing shared knowledge (Wang & Kang 2006). A social factor may further be necessary for enhancing a transactional learning experience that is a collaborative, recursive, and a mutually beneficial experience to students – and educators - in RMTL

settings (Garrison 2015). The need to establish a community through a robust social factor is essential in establishing deep connections between students in RMTL (Garrison 2015).

A cybergogy framework cultivates the conditions necessary for collaborative learning by enabling the student to share the experiences and knowledge (Muresan 2015). Such a framework may, therefore, serve a valuable function in RMTL practices, particularly in creating those spaces necessary for autonomous and collaborative learning, spaces in which students are afforded opportunities to achieve their learning objectives flexibly and in line with their profiles and time management (Wang & Kang 2006). If RMTL is to be effective in South African universities, in line with the cybergogy framework, Wang & Kang (2006) suggest that students ought always to have sufficient prior knowledge, be motivated to learn, be positively engaged in the learning process, and should always feel comfortable with the learning environment by developing – or being helped and encouraged to develop - a sense of community and social commitment.

While the cybergogy framework may serve useful in creating mean-ingful and engaging learning experiences for students in remote contexts, Wang & Kang (2006) acknowledge the absence of a transactional presence in the framework that aims to address the connectedness between educators and students. The notion concerning transactional is derived from the original thoughts of John Dewey (Dewey & Bently 1949). Informed by Deweyan thought, Moore (1993:21) submitted that transactional distance as a theory describes the universe of teacher-student relationships that exist as a result of a separation of space/and or by time. The extent of transactional distance in educational programmes is thus a function of three-set variables that include the structure of instructional programmes, the interaction between students and educators, and the degree of autonomy of students (Moore 1993). While Wang & Kang (2006) explore the three underlying social, cognitive, and emotive factors in creating spaces for student autonomy, the absence of a physical teaching presence presents students who are unaccustomed to working on their own with significant challenges in RMTL settings.

Garrison (1987; 2000; 2015) argues that, while there is no compre-hensive explanatory theory which justifies student dropout rates through RMTL, the absence of a teaching presence is a significant contributing factor, particularly in terms of the collaborative thinking and learning experiences accompanying such a presence, and one that aims to engage students critically.

Garrison (2015) links the lack of 'quality communication' - mainly in terms of opportunities for feedback and interaction - as the factors driving student drop out of course programmes in RMTL. In their framework Garrison, Anderson, & Archer (2000) describe teaching presence as the third element and key to a successful and sustained Community of Inquiry (CoI). The teaching presence provides the essential leadership dimension necessary in sustaining the functioning of a community effectively and efficiently (Garrison 2015). Although the CoI framework does not take into account a separate emotive factor as the cybergogy framework of Wang & Kang (2006) does, the literature suggests the presence of emotion in learning online or other modes of learning (Campbell & Cleveland-Innes 2005; Derks, Fischer & Bos 2007; Marchand & Gutierrez 2011; O'Regan 2003; Lehman 2006; Perry & Edwards 2005; Cleveland-Innes 2012).

Moore (1993) claimed that students with high cognitive capacities appear to be quite comfortable with fewer dialogic programmes with minimal structure and are, in turn, autonomous in their learning. By contrast, other students prefer to rely on the informal structure that resonates with them as a result of a close relationship/rapport they may have with their educators. If one goes with Moore's (1993) view, the idea of the cybergogy framework should, therefore, be dependent on the transition from a steady teaching factor and depending on whether students are less likely to understand, for instance complex terminology, towards a more robust social factor where students become more comfortable working as an online community. The presence of a robust emotive factor may in due course materialise as well through the role of the educator in supporting students during RMTL. It further makes sense to argue that the presence of a teaching factor in cybergogy may afford students greater motivation and responsibility towards correcting, not only many misconceptions that others may have in online encounters, but also their own misconceptions. In their work 40 years ago, Argyris &Schön, 1978 described double-loop learning that occurs when an error is identified and corrected in ways that involve the modification of the underlying norms, policies, and objectives of an entity. Although Argyris & Schön (1978) refer to organisational behaviour theory, it is a theory which have been applied to students in educational contexts (Hase & Kenyon 2000; Hornsby & Maki 2008; Blaschke, Porto & Kurtz 2010; Cochrane & Bateman 2010; Junco, Heiberger, & Loken 2010; Blaschke 2012).

Of course, students ought to be encouraged to think laterally in their

learning contexts, which is why we argue for an active teaching factor in a cybergogy. Garrison (2015) also submits that the distributed responsibility amongst a number of students and their educators through a teaching presence has significant implications for learning and thinking collaboratively that includes the development in students of a metacognitive awareness and ability to manage thinking both collaboratively and individually. The development in students of an ability to critically scrutinise and reflect upon complex problems both individually and collaboratively by critically and mindfully examining the context in which the problem is situated, we argue, may lead to a significant level of knowledge co-construction rather than a one-way, online, presenter 'top-down' approach to learning.

Considering that distance education can be described in terms of the delivery of learning to those who are connected by time and space, it makes sense to integrate a fourth factor into the cybergogy framework. Thus, we argue that as university educators, our acknowledgement of our sense of splace, together with our students, is key in the successful implementation of RMTL. Using a sense of splace as a guiding principle in the redesigning of courses and re-curriculation processes, we argue, has the potential to narrow the psychological and emotional distance between ourselves and students, and revive a sense of presence.

3.1 Extending Cybergogy: From a Sense of Place to a Sense of Splace

According to Ardoin (2006), sense of place is a holistic concept comprising connection to psychological, social, cultural, biophysical, political, and economic systems. It broadly describes the human connection to places, including place attachment and place meaning (Stedman 2003; Farnum *et al.* 2005; Smaldone *et al.* 2005). Resor (2010) claims that it is only when we start to acknowledge the inter-relationship of these dimensions that sense of place as a multidimensional and integrated concept is adequately understood. According to Relph (1976:25), places that lack a *sense* of place, become placeless, and are seen as 'non-places', as Augé (1995) later referred to them. To fully comprehend how important a sense of place is, one must first understand the encompassing concept of place. According to Augé (1995), place is organised space that has been ordered in some way to serve some human need. Furthermore, place a refers to a bounded symbolic, social, and

material domain, to which humans are emotionally attached, and the meanings of which are constitutive of their identities (Kudryavtsev, Stedman & Krasny 2012; Garrard 2010; Bonnett 2013; Wattchow & Brown 2011). According to Hill and Brown (2014), Nicol (2014), and Thorburn & Marshall (2014), place evokes notions of a direct, significant experience and imbuement with the more-than-human world. Gruenewald (2003) provides five dimensions of place, namely, the perceptual, sociological, ecological, political, and ideological dimensions, to demonstrate that the concept is multidimensional and consisting of, or amounting to, more than mere coordinates on a map (for a more detailed discussion on this see Ontong & Le Grange 2016; Le Grange & Ontong 2018; Ontong 2019).

Due to increased human mobility in a cosmopolitan world, the scale(s) of what people consider their place(s) may be a crucial variable in our understanding of place connections (Massey 1991; Stedman & Ardoin 2013: Chapin & Knapp 2015; Armstrong & Stedman 2018). However, connecting to one's surrounding, including one's work environment, does not only establish knowledge of, and appreciation for, its resources. It also supports the development of personal identity, inspires stewardship, and nurtures empathy. In other words, a sense of place is crucial to developing strong and healthy connections to one's environment.

In Ardoin's (2006) conceptual sense of place framework, the biophysical dimension provides the setting for all interactions to occur. This dimension includes the landscape and the plant and animal species that interact within the ecosystem and are one of the fundamental components of sense of place (Stedman 2003; Trentelman 2009). Following the literature, three additional dimensions are also considered. First, the sociocultural dimension involves cultural practices and demographic conditions. Second, the psychological dimension refers to those characteristics internal to a person and a person's relationship to place, for example, a feeling of 'belonging somewhere' (Stokols & Shumaker 1981). Third, the political-economic dimension entails job opportunities, financial considerations, and political boundaries (Ardoin, Gould & Schuh 2012).

As mentioned earlier, the cybergogy framework, advocated by Wang & Kang (2006) is premised on strategies for creating engaged learning online. We argue that the cognitive dimension which relates to the construction of knowledge intersects with the psychological dimension of sense of place. One should also keep in mind that effective learning is directly linked to the

emotional state of a student. Educators therefore need to create an atmosphere of mutual affection and respect in which to teach and learn (emotive factors), rather than one of fear and intimidation. The social domain is the domain in which the social acts involving interactions with self and others take place, and relates to the social-cultural elements of sense of place. Here it is important to note that places are essentially socially constructed entities: people make places, and places make people (Gruenewald 2003).

Recently, a popular question circulating among university educators is, how can students be more meaningfully engaged to enhance their remote learning experiences? For Bangert-Drowns & Pyke (2002:27), engagement

> … is a multidimensional phenomenon that varies from setting to setting: time-on-task, self-regulated learning, intrinsically motivated involvement of integrated cognitive process, learning environment (quality of the dialogue), and production of tangible results.

We argue that a re-examination of currently employed cybergogies, together with the acknowledgement of students' sense of splace during remote learning, might be a good starting point for educators to engage more meaningfully and effectively with students. Bangert-Drowns & Pyke (2001) also claim that diverse perspectives around the relationship between 'place' and learning relating to RMTL exist. They further assert that, in any learning environment, truly engaged students are behaviourally, intellectually, and emotionally involved in their learning tasks.

It is no surprise that the way sense of place as a concept develops in the education context, and what it represents, has shifted in light of the current pandemic. This is even more so in the case of RMTL. While a sense of place is related more specifically to physical places, sense of splace acknowledges the intersection of both the physical and virtual spaces as profound settings for engagement and meaning-making. While sense of place would pertain more to contact or face to face education, a sense of splace (see Figure 1) would apply more to online and distance education in RMTL, where the student is entrenched in the integrated social-ecological-political-psychological and virtual dimensions of their learning sites.

In Figure 1, the biophysical dimension, as well as the political-economic dimensions, together form the foundational settings on which the other dimensions function.
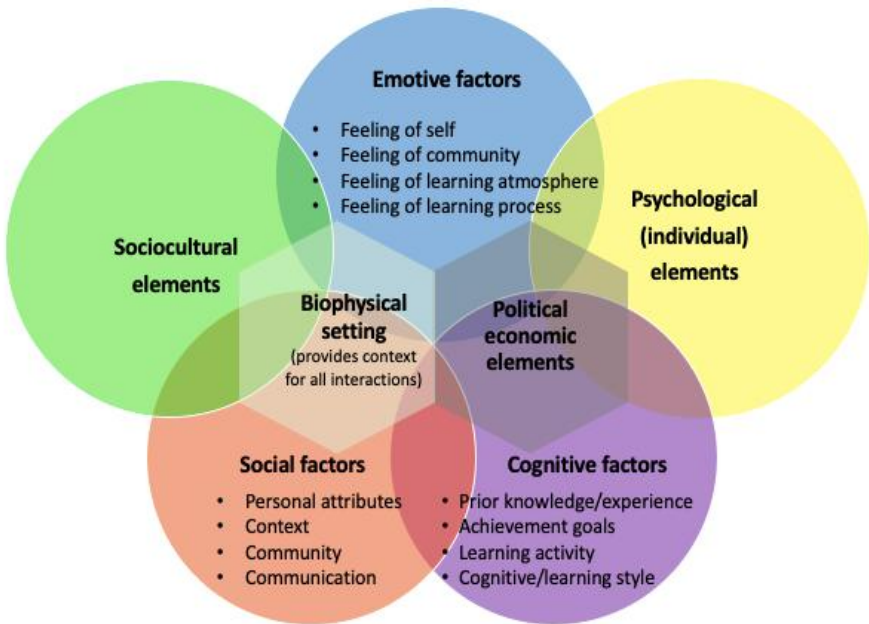
Figure 1: The sense of splace conceptual framework

During RMTL each student finds him/herself entrenched in the biophysical and political-economic dimensions of place. However, not all students' individual connections to these dimensions are necessarily positive; in other words, not all of them have a strong sense of splace due to various factors. As Adams (2013) claims, sense of place may conjure contradicting emotions — the warmth of community and home juxtaposed with the stress of dense urban living. Some students might experience structural racism, violence, gender discrimination, and financial issues (political-economic). Others might experience a lack of resources, such as internet connectivity, infrastructure, running water, clean air, and so forth (biophysical). Irrespective of whether students have a secure or a negative connection to the places where they currently reside, the biophysical and political-economic dimensions are the macrocosms over which they have little control.

Further, the psychological dimension of sense of place relates to the cognitive and emotive dimensions of cybergogy as the former relies on a high

level of intellectual abstraction of cognitions, beliefs, attitudes, or other mental representations about the physical, social, or personal qualities of a (learning) setting (Vanclay *et al.* 2008). Thus, student and educator have an equal responsibility to ensure that knowledge is constructed, achievable goals are set, the learning activity is understood, and a learning style that works is chosen. Sense of splace is formed based on the nature of the educational setting, the kind/amount of experience with that setting, and the sociocultural, psychological, cognitive, and emotional characteristics of the individual (Stedman 2003). A focus on the relative contribution of the different dimensions of sense of place would demonstrate not only the holistic nature of the concept, but also the close relatedness of students, culture, and the environment in the human-nature relationship. The concept of 'situated cognition' is one way to understand this conjoining of people and place. Situated cognition refers, in or argument, to how meaningful actions are spatially and temporally located (i.e. situated) (Chemero 2009) alongside socially and culturally constructed meaning (Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). For example, how decisions concerning the speed at which students learn or master a concept are shaped by the students' characteristics as individuals. These would be based on and include the following:

- whether the student is in good physical and mental shape, and whether he/she is generally risk-averse or risk-seeking;
- the visual perception and representation of the learning process including the content, styles, and pace in specific courses (e.g., whether the topic is content laden, the nature of the potential potholes that he/she might fall into);
- the student's previous experiences of learning tied to deeply held place/splace meanings and the social expectations of significant others accrued over time (Raymond *et al.* 2018).

Such dynamic relations imply an inseparability of subject and object, i.e. the student and the learning activity (Maturana & Varela 1987; Lakoff & Johnson 1999). This inseparability could also relate to learning networks which Lusher & Robins (2013) perceive as a collection of ties between people or between people and learning objects. According to Lusher & Robins (2013), networks can organize themselves into certain patterns because the existence of some ties encourages other ties to come into existence. Such ties, we argue,

are essential in establishing a transactional presence. Carvalho & Goodyear (2014: 264) claim that learning networks are,

> … providing educational contexts [formal, non-formal or informal] where certain pedagogical interactions take place and where people are exchanging views and experiences related to knowledge and knowing.

Although certain elements of (online) learning network theory promise to be useful in RMTL approaches, one should be cautious of relying solely on any of these as a theoretical framework. We contend that such frameworks often de-emphasise macro-structure measures, such as density, network size, and the effects of these networks on quality learning. Such a framework often also neglects the emotional, spiritual, and psychological aspects of teaching and learning. Hence, we suggest that any theoretical framework could be enriched and made more meaningful by the cybergogical approach of splace, just as the latter could be theoretically strengthened by some aspects of learning network theory.

We further propose some general guidelines for university educators to consider when designing online courses. First, we suggest that instructors should provide clear and well-structured opening questions regarding the students' splace of living and learning. This would indicate to students that their instructors show sincere interest in the splace-making of students, for example, finding out how their 'becoming' has been affected by the spatial intersections of the virtual learning space and the physical living place. Also, they could encourage active and consistent participation in remote teaching and learning as far as possible, and this could also serve as an incentive to promote the development of a transactional presence, for example, when designing courses instructions could include that each participant contribute at least two posts or two comments on documents/posts. Instructors could also ensure that they provide enough workload and study material to be cognitively challenging yet emotionally and physically achievable. Furthermore, they could formulate open exploratory questions so participants are motivated to learn (in academic and non-academic ways) from others through online blog/dialogue or Zoom-type meetings. Setting up a base group discussion forum at the beginning of a course, in the course of which participants can get to know each other and ask general questions, could also serve a useful function. Last, but not least, instructors could also embed learning and assessment activities, such as peer-

review, to avoid these becoming the centre of discussions. The main goal is to humanise the RMTL approach by centralising students' sense of splace throughout teaching practices - from curriculum and course material designs to assessments, discussions and general communication.

4 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, we have attempted to demonstrate some ways in which existing cybergogical approaches in RMTL can be re-examined and creatively enhanced by integrating the concept of sense of place. In doing so, we consider our chapter to have generated a renewed holistic framework, *a sense of splace*, one which has the potential to foster profound and more meaningful engaged teaching and learning. We offer some final recommendations concerning RMTL in line with a sense of splace framework.

It is essential that university educators first and foremost do not lose sight of the diverse, cosmopolitan, interconnected human and the more-than-human world in which we live, work, and play. According to Rui Olds (1979: 41),

> … the motivation to interact with the environment exists in all [students] as an intrinsic property of life, but the quality of the interactions is dependent upon the possibilities for engagement that the (physical/ learning) environment provides.

In the context of RMTL, teaching and learning splaces should be the foundations for resilience and adaptation to cognitive, social, psychological, emotional, economic, and political challenges, all of which factors are inter-related in terms of students' learning. For this purpose, we argue, university educators should consider the promotion and nurture of a *pragmatic sense of splace*. This implies that academic programs can directly influence the 'learning splace identity' of students.

Although not always explicitly stated, sense of (s)place is inherent to all learning initiatives (Thomashow 2002). A just cybergogical approach which recognises a sense of place would, for example, involve students in projects where they serve as experts on specific topics. Valuing students' contributions, respecting their viewpoints, and recognising their efforts as ambassadors of the local and global environment has the potential not only to foster engaged

learning, but also to embed deeper meanings of learning and identity in dynamic RMTL splaces. In such an environment, students ought to always be free from any form of coercion from their educators or peers which, in contrast to traditional rigid, authoritarian classroom settings, prohibit autonomous decision-making and critical inquiry (see Waghid 2016). As in physical classrooms, 'muted' students online could quickly become accustomed to being told what to do, serving as passive recipients of information which undoubtedly exacerbates a high level of non-criticality amongst such students (Waghid & Waghid 2018).

We suggest that traditional modes of assessment, such as standardised tests, ought to be re-examined, not only in distance learning, but also in face-to-face teaching and learning. For example, Gruenewald (2005) suggests that educators should redefine education and research as forms of inquiry that are identifiably place-responsive, and afford a multiplicity of approaches to define and describe students' relationships to their learning environment. Thus, we have argued that for the need for all university educators to engage in reflective activities that provide them with opportunities to learn about their sense of splace, including what they value about the natural, human, and virtual environment. Demonstrating one's continued learning and learning challenges would significantly aid in the process of facilitating students in developing their own strong sense of splace in diverse learning settings. Through sharing our own experiences and challenges as educators of RMTL with students, we can together deepen our awareness of, and sensitivity to, our new teaching and learning environment and to each other. Such awareness and receptivity to place can positively influence those collective and individual actions that could help in creating dynamic, flexible, and sustainable remote teaching and learning splaces. In this regard, we advocate for a sense of splace framework that could support university educators in their attempts to connect students, and teaching and learning with the primary goals of increasing student engagement, boosting academic outcomes, impacting communities, and promoting conscious understandings of the world around us. This framework is, of course, still at the theoretical stage. Thus, it is envisaged that further empirical studies could validate the elements of a sense of splace framework in RMTL settings.

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Access, Acclimatisation and Attitude: Negotiating Postgraduate Education Online

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Abstract

This chapter constitutes a practice-led research approach reflecting on the experiences of lecturers and students in embracing an online mode of delivery using the Zoom® platform to deliver a module, 'Higher education: Context and policy', a part of a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education. The chapter draws on these reflections on, in and from practice, to generate a set of theoretical possibilities. These possibilities culminate in alternative, sustainable, future higher education pedagogies. Rather than adopting absolute and certain answers related to teaching and learning in higher education, the chapter acknowledges pedagogies of uncertainties as the new desired normal. The module provided an opportunity for the lecturers and students, who are themselves lecturers in rural universities and a private university from different disciplines, to open themselves to developing competences that embrace an unfamiliar technological pedagogical strategy using an array of digital tools. It revealed that lecturers in higher education already have resources which have not yet been fully activated. The context allowed us to search for creative, innovative and provocative ways of delivering the five-day block module and paved the way for the students to design and deliver courses for their own students in the context of a continued lockdown.

Keywords: higher education pedagogy, accessibility, acclimatisation, attitude, online modes of delivery

1 Introduction

The interest in 'reflective practice' has dominated the field of educational research for at least the last sixty years, since it is considered crucial to the activation of professional development of teachers. However, the tradition has earlier historical roots as it underpins an examination of all forms of formal and informal education as a cultural preparation for participation in a wider social system. Leitch and Day (2006) caution that distinction needs to be made by casual 'reflection' and 'reflective practice', the latter being a deliberative form of research activity. They refer to the seminal work of Dewey (1933: 12), who defined reflective thinking as embodying a 'number of phases in thinking, i.e., a state of doubt, hesitation and mental difficulty in which thinking originates, followed by an act of searching or inquiring to find material that will resolve doubt'. This has inspired the later coining of the term 'the teacher-as researcher' popularised by Stenhouse (1975), whose work was extended by other theorists like Schön (1983). Schön popularised the notion of the 'reflective practitioner', showing how thinking and action are intertwined discursively. Later theorists (Carr & Kemmis 1986) suggested that teaching action should be centrally linked to the agendas of developing greater social justice in the acts of designing and delivery of pedagogies. These traditions challenged dominant notions of scientific research being confined to a theory-led agenda of testing hypotheses of pre-existing theoretical worldviews. Instead, they celebrate the value of the researched reflections from the world of practice informing the development of theoretical interpretations. This has led to some arguing that this alternative constitutes a 'practice-led' agenda that foregrounds the quest for understanding 'relational knowing' that underpins the interactivity across specific groups of participants in specific practice conditions (Richardson 1994; Bell 2009; Smith & Dean 2009). It emphasises the interest in addressing the immediate needs of practitioners through more in-depth understandings of themselves as a form of staff professional development.

This chapter presents an example of practice-led research that aims to locate the specific context of myself as a lecturer in higher education, grappling with the onset of the outbreak of the global pandemic of COVID-19. It aims to show the relational knowings that were discursively produced as I interacted with my postgraduate students.

Michael Samuel

This chapter reflects on my recent relocation into the field of Higher Education Studies within the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in Durban, South Africa. It draws on my reflective experiences of engaging with a postgraduate programme targeting the development of early-career academics, the Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education (PGDipHE). This programme focused on a capacity-building qualification to prepare practising professional lecturers at a range of South African universities. Many of these lecturers were from historically disadvantaged institutions and served as teachers of undergraduate studies, while a few were in more administrative senior positions in university governance structures[1]. The programme provided the means to examine how I engaged with the design challenges of the curriculum in postgraduate studies, primarily when my own technological literacies were restricted to the use of emails and online mediations of written textual material produced by my doctoral students. My postgraduate pedagogy had been relatively focused on the supervision of thesis development, whilst the new PGDipHE warranted that I again become more present as a teacher/facilitator of interactive learning[2]. Nonetheless, my interactive competences as a teacher were engaged in my delivery of postgraduate cohort seminar models of supervision, and I drew generously from these experiences.

This chapter reveals that the new normal environment has exposed many doubts and fault lines that already existed within higher education pedagogy, but have not yet been tackled. It reflects my search for materials that will assist in resolving doubts about the kinds of actions and strategies adopted by both my peers and my students as they too prepared to grapple with practical action as teachers in higher education during COVID-19 times. Many of the past practices continue within the present COVID-19 times. My reflections examine how the lecturers responded to the coinciding of the commencement of their module with the national lockdown, which imposed social restrictions and limited movement. The module was entitled 'Higher education: Context

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[1] I use the term 'lecturers' to refer to the ranks within the university system, but the term 'students' when referring to them as participants in the PGDipHE. I refer to my own role as the 'teacher' of the module.

[2] I do not discount that supervision is a specialist form of teaching and learning since promoting doctoral learning is indeed a form of pedagogy (see Samuel 2018).

and policy' and it was designed to reflect on the current challenges and opportunities to activate a critical examination of discourses in the sector. It commenced in early March 2020, before the official lockdown. In anticipation of forthcoming restrictions on students travelling from their provinces to the UKZN campus site, it was decided to utilise online delivery[3]. The lecturers/students were at that stage still able to access their university offices where computers were available. With the formal promulgation of more stringent social distancing mid-way through the module, new modes of delivery into their homes had to be designed.

How did the students embrace the shift to alternative pedagogical modes of delivery? What forms of acclimatising were needed, and why were these orientation sessions required? How did this new pedagogical mode influence their attitude towards their roles and responsibilities as higher education curriculum specialists and designers of their own pedagogy for future practice? Amidst all these concerns was how to deal with the vulnerabilities not only of the students (in this case, lecturers), but also of myself as a lecturer/teacher of this new mode of delivery.

I recognise that the stabilisation of the academic programme in the wake of the Corona-19 virus (COVID-19) has prioritised delivery of the undergraduate curriculum. This is understandable given that the majority of students in the post-secondary education system are located within these foundational Bachelor degrees or certificate/diploma courses. An online technological solution has become the uniform response, and students'

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[3] It may be argued, therefore, that the mode of delivery reflected on in this chapter does not constitute a sustained design of online pedagogy as is normatively characteristic of designated open and distance learning institutions that use online learning as their prime modality. Instead, the UKZN delivery of an online strategy could be interpreted as an 'emergency remote teaching pedagogical intervention', one which (un)consciously embedded degrees of temporality contingent on the duration of the pandemic and official governmental lockdown policies. However, in the reflective engagements with students in the PGDipHE, many expressed the convenience of the new 'abnormal mode' since it obviated costly travel and accommodation expenses related to face-to-face delivery. Their hints were directed towards the new modality becoming a preferred modality, despite UKZN being largely a face-to-face institution.

readiness to cope has preoccupied the focus of course designers and managers. I agree with the agenda directed towards the challenges of confronting students who are unable to access the new technological highways. The worlds of the majority of South African students are restricted by the constraints of poverty and digital dis-connectivity that have yet to be addressed in a highly fragmented social system (Maringe 2017). More than twenty years of democracy in South Africa has not alleviated apartheid class divides, and most working-class and unemployed people remain on the fringes, as spectators of the middle-class educational stage.

However, this chapter cautions that uncritical use of digital modes might merely reinforce the habituated models of knowledge engagement of the past as the new technological strategies run the risk of reinforcing old routines. It challenges whether our benchmarks for higher education are indeed being set too low. I argue that these risks do not only reside amongst the student population, but also within lecturers themselves. Lecturers, too, are not necessarily fully embracing their theoretical, pedagogical responsibilities of introducing the next generation to imaginative new worlds. They are also restricted in their expertise in 'accessibility' to new technologies and pedagogical knowledge-development modes of higher education. A further serious concern is that lecturers' theoretical understanding of the rationale for 'higher education' practices and actions, is often lacking.

This risk is further accentuated when one engages with the more complex curriculum expectations of postgraduate studies and the research endeavour. It is for this reason that this chapter focuses on the postgraduate sector. Pedagogies in this sector need to go beyond dealing with received bodies of knowledge to promote the development of knowledge-making, where students become critical knowledge-constructors that draw inspiration from a range of resources. The need to forge broader networks to find meaningful joined-up thinking across a variety of sectors, is the hallmark of the postgraduate project.

In COVID-19 times, the range of participating partners has been brought into much sharper relief. Diverse sectors (perhaps previously distanced from one another) have been coerced into reimagining their modes of engagement and mutual collaboration. This has revealed that latent expertise and liabilities reside in government and institutional structures, amongst scientists and professionals, across both learners and their teachers, and in dialogue with technical providers, network operators and their consumers. A

new normal is being created in the ways in which publishers, the media and their readerships are interacting to produce and respond to new knowledges and their creation. Amidst the striving towards a 'new normal', there nevertheless resides a fresh environment of vulnerabilities, uncertainties and insecurities amongst many partners. Ritualised habits of past routines of higher education delivery are unlikely to remain unaltered. Moreover, disciplinary boundary crossings are likely to become the sources for inspiration to sustain the future. A shared collaborative effort across these different experts is likely to ensure viable prospects when these so-called adversities are more consciously embraced (Kim 2020).

This chapter foregrounds three main concerns about the conceptualisation of *accessibility*, emphasising *acclimatisation* towards the new normal, and finally, a view on shifts in *attitude* to sustain quality higher education pedagogy. Although intertwined, I will explore these constructs individually to demonstrate the complexity of negotiating change in higher education, which has been accentuated by the COVID-19 context. I argue that current preoccupations have been about how students access the forms of technological modalities, without due diligence to how they access deeper theoretical conceptions of the substance and agenda of their education involvement, especially at postgraduate level. This has warranted that my pedagogical practice acclimatises students to greater self-directed, autonomous learning, the hallmark of higher education generally, but more specifically of postgraduate students who are themselves lecturers in higher education. The third concern of attitude is not just a mental reflective predisposition, but a theoretical reconsideration of how we align ourselves to the new era of ongoing technological revolutions which will usher in new directions for managing dialogue across multiple stakeholders. I argue that these resources exist latently but are not yet fully activated.

In line with the tradition of practice-led research, I first present my reflective engagement on my pedagogies with my students. Thereafter, I draw on what emerged as recurrent themes across the data harvested. I close the chapter drawing on the theoretical work of Harriri (2018), to synthesise the chapter towards re-imaginative dispositions that university academics could consider. This pattern reinforces the practice-led agenda of reflection on past practices, in the present processes of teaching practices and the exploration for conceptualising future practice. Harriri (2018) argues that the Technological Revolution (like other major revolutions in history) will introduce the norm of

perpetual instability, transience and uncertainty. One can hardly expect a return to stabilities. Harriri suggests that our new normal will be an era of short-lived, multiple, never-ending revolutions, as knowledges repeatedly become outdated and updated frequently. What are the implications of such a philosophical worldview for students and lecturers of postgraduate studies? The generation of the discursive questions at the end of each section of the chapter is to demonstrate the syntax of academic staff and professional teacher development discourses that could characterise our reflections on pedagogical higher education practices.

2 On Accessibility

Blewett's (2015) doctoral study, which explored alternative modes of using digital social media technologies in teaching a course on Computer Studies at the undergraduate level, pointed out that technology itself is not the solution to alternative critical pedagogies. An essential resource within alternative modes of delivery is the teacher herself as an agent of learning/teaching. She is the mediator of the relationships between the propositional content of the curriculum and the learners' (sometimes similar, but more likely divergent) worlds. The form of mediation the teacher activates serves as a network between the learners' existing prior knowledge, the intended worldviews of the teacher and the targeted curriculum. No doubt, much more than the intended curriculum is learnt through these interactive processes, and many unexpected and hidden learnings are fostered within this engagement. Simultaneously, a covert curriculum is also produced by what teachers choose to silence (intentionally or not) from the overt formal curriculum (McArthur 2015)[4]. This scope of the educational enterprise challenges the overly rationalistic fixation with predetermined specifications of targeted outcomes. Instead, it allows for the flexibility of all actors co-constructing the agenda of experiential learning and teaching. The act of teaching thus becomes a continuing kaleidoscope of learning and re-learning for both the teachers and the learners/students (Dhunpath *et al.* 2019). Teachers and technology provide opportunities, but learners are responsible agents in their personal growth and development.

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[4] McArthur (2015) problematises the limited notions of higher education curriculum within the context of Information systems lecturers engaging with teaching postgraduate research methodologies modules.

This argument suggests that pedagogy using technology is no different in its rationale to the usual face-to-face pedagogies, which accentuate the need for the teacher to be seen not merely as a deliverer of content. Simultaneously, the pedagogical moment embraces the need for learners to take ownership of the sending sources and to assert agency over the curriculum. The role of the learner is a crucial ingredient in the quest for critical education. Passive education is not the intended hallmark of 'higher education'. The teacher and learner are thus engaged in an exchange of differing worldviews as they come to negotiate the contested nature of quality education.

Within this worldview, the process of knowledge-making (selecting, re-selecting, re-ordering and re-purposing) is the constitutive purpose of higher education pedagogies. Unfortunately, in the rush towards the delivery of continued operations within higher education under the present pandemic conditions, there seems to be a jettisoning of the theoretical agenda and rationale of the knowledge-making enterprise of the higher education system. The delivery mode of transfer of the knowledge content takes priority over lecturers' expected mediation of the targeted content and goals of the curriculum. This foregrounding of whether students are able to access the targeted new form of technological modalities is perhaps driven by the concern (described earlier) about the inequities of opportunities for varied members of the South African society. Clearly, not all students, coming from various class, race or geographic settings, have the same degrees of (physical or technical) access to the internet which serves as the backbone to the new modalities; nor do all students necessarily possess the technological hardware to access the alternative modes of the new pedagogical strategy.

However, the lecturers/students in my specific group of the PGDipHE were not necessarily in the category of those unable to physically access the hardware. Their challenges were related to the stability of internet connectivity within their workplaces or homes, and the relative uncertainty that possible electrical power cuts may have on their participation. However, matters of accessibility cannot be restricted to modalities of operation; they should include how the students oriented themselves to gaining entry into the theoretical/conceptual mode of engagement with the propositional content of the modules. This had a dual effect of challenging my pedagogy as the course facilitator, as well as activating reflection by the lecturers/students on their preparation for the future roles as facilitators of their education pedagogies in the future. How are teachers/lecturers systematically directing teaching-

learning processes towards the achievement of the targeted exit attributes of the curriculum? How are these exit attributes themselves opened up for scrutiny in the act of pedagogy? This warrants a shift in the interpretation of the founding role of university lecturers as professional academics. In principle, it is possible that resourceful mediators of teaching and learning will utilise any form of pedagogical technology (digitised or not) to activate in-depth critical knowledge. Moreover, this was the subject content of the theme of the module focussing on the specific contextual landscape of higher education and its policies.

The lack of clarity of the purposes of the higher education enterprise fuels a fetish with technological modes, which come to dominate the discourses of what constitutes an effective new lecturer. Surely it entails being more than one who is responsible for uploading material on digital platforms for one's students? This restrictive misconception merely ensures passive accessibility of students to the already-constructed worldview of the teachers/lecturers. It is indeed nothing more than the traditional approach of 'banking education', which Freire (1972) in his seminal work, proposed was a form of disguised oppression in the name of education. This, Freire argued, is a subtle subjugation to existing hierarchical relations that foregrounds the sender of the message rather than the dialogical interactivity with received bodies of existing packaged worldviews[5]. More profound quality education involves conscientisation about the message, the medium and the mediation. Harari (2018) argues that, especially in the context of boundary-crossings between a plethora of disciplinary contexts, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary disruptive knowledges are likely to activate the new frontiers of the 21st century (more on this later). Higher education should, therefore, be directed not towards preservation of disciplinary knowledge enclaves, but an exchange, migration and borrowing across previously bounded worldviews. This includes the curriculum being a mediation of the encultured notions of self and others, one's own and others' prior cultural worldviews about matters such as race,

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[5] Mignolo (2011) further emphasised the skewed epistemological content of these received bodies of knowledge. He argued that as academics adopting an agenda of redressing social inequities, there was need for an epistemic disobedience towards knowledge hallmarks that are constructed exclusively in western thought. An interactive critique of knowledge sources and their origins constitutes the agenda of higher education.

religions, gender and sexualities (Nadar & Reddy 2016). Therefore, material uploaded onto technological platforms cannot be limited to digestible chunks without a careful challenge to activate students' critical questioning of the knowledge-making enterprise. My concern as a reflective practitioner was about how these lecturers/students were indeed engaging with accessing the knowledge system beyond the restricted confines of distinct disciplines, and whether they were expanding their access to alternative interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary epistemologies. This has serious implications for how technological modes are being utilised to enable such interactivity. It is the teacher, not the technological mode itself, that drives quality education.

The delivery of the PGDipHE highlighted for me that many of the lecturer participants who were engaged in this academic staff development capacity-building programme had themselves not deeply challenged the conceptions of their roles and responsibilities as educators within the university system. As lecturers, there was a tendency to transfer the source of the challenges of their own previous (before COVID-19) pedagogies to students. A deficit discourse dominated their early reflections during the course about what constituted significant challenges in the higher education system. The lecturers framed students as not deeply engaged with the material of their course content. They suggested that many of their students did not see the project of higher education as intrinsic to deep learning. Most students, they reflected, were focused on the superficial requirements of how to gain positive grades on their assessments. Instrumentalist certification rather than educational achievement was seemingly their preoccupation. Moreover, the lecturers commented that their students tended to attend lectures infrequently, which they sometimes attributed to the inadequate physical resources of lecture halls unable to accommodate the massified enrolment of students in their modules.

Disappointedly, the lecturers/students reported that their dominant modes of delivery adopted within their pedagogies resorted to a 'front-led delivery of content'. This continued to produce passivity amongst their students who transferred the responsibility to the teacher/lecturer to 'deliver the goods' and moreover, deliver the strategies to show them how to pass this module. Arguably, the lecturers absolved themselves of responsibility by concluding that the solutions to quality education resided outside their control. This reinforced the view that current pedagogical practices were not allowing their own students to gain access to deeper epistemological pursuits and the

creation of new knowledges. Instead, their students, via the selected pedagogy, adopted largely passive consumerist absorption roles, conceiving themselves as recipients of pre-packaged bodies of knowledge. This was not access to forms of 'higher learning', and is seemingly paradoxical, especially in the context of the strong resistance to the imposed 'colonised curriculum' around which student protests of the early 2000s rallied. The reflective and doubtful question remains: were these passive pedagogical constructions directed by students alone, or were lecturers also complicit in the delivery of these kinds of truncated access to higher learning?

This fixation with mastery of codified existing disciplinary pieces of knowledge is perhaps related to the specific undergraduate modules in which these PGDipHE lecturers were engaged. For example, there was a belief that the Accounting disciplines were founded on universalist uncontestable epistemologies. There were some flexibility in how conceptions of trauma were being identified and managed in Community psychology, whilst Music education and Film and Theatre studies hinted at the need to expand the boundaries of imagination and creativity. Surprisingly, a strong push for accountabilities and performance-driven assessment of (school) learners was noted within the discipline of Education. Nevertheless, all the lecturers were preoccupied with the formal assessment achievement of their students. During the module, they retrospectively queried the overly formalised competences of their own curricula, questioning where and how 'soft skills' such as social and professional interactivities were being developed. They defended their curriculum delivery as related to the early undergraduate courses, where the emphasis was seen as creating the foundational platform of baseline knowledge for further, more robust critique and engagement at a later stage. However, the lecturers' take was that undergraduate courses were not necessarily about engaging in the knowledge-making epistemological enterprise. It is thus likely that they would perceive effective lecturing as limited to the commodified packaging conception of knowledge. Ironically, they were able to rhetorically profess the overarching, more sociological mandates of their own institutional missions and vision, which invariably declared more all-encompassing social and critical citizenry agendas.

So how different is the new mode of online pedagogies likely to be with respect to challenging the boundedness of knowledge? Seemingly, both students and their lecturers are locked within a superficial mode of 'higher education' of transferring received bodies of knowledge, and expedient ways

of ensuring that students pass through the module assessment hoops. This is reinforced by the performativity culture that monitors the quality of a lecturer not on deep, quality engagement with the content of the curriculum, but mainly via the throughput rates of their students.

'Accessibility' therefore suggests a deeper epistemological consideration than merely a matter of having entry to mediums of teaching and learning. So, what acclimatisation to deeper forms of pedagogy, roles and responsibilities were needed in this particular programme with which I was engaged as a teacher of the PGDipHE? What capacity-building of lecturers was required?

3 On Acclimatisation

This section foregrounds the range of acclimatisations that I had to engage as a facilitator of the learning/teaching project. It included my own preparation for the course, the pedagogical activities designed before and during the module itself, and the attention to negotiating students' own personal and public technological literacy spaces. Simultaneously, acclimatisation away from dependency to autonomous learning responsibilities amongst students was being co-produced.

In preparation for the delivery of the module, I chose to attend a series of *staff-capacity development programmes* which UKZN was offering towards acclimatising lecturers to embrace online, digital flexible blended learning approaches. I attended courses on Zoom technology, the use of Moodle in more interactive pedagogies, and the redesign of alternative assessment strategies online. These expanded my confidence as a learner of alternative models of delivery. Being put in the role of learner allowed me to experience first-hand the kinds of vulnerabilities I had to address as I embraced new learning and teaching modalities. I consciously chose to draw on my pedagogical and curriculum design experiences to harness the technological potential of these new digital means. I realised that I also had to incorporate this kind of acclimatisation and harnessing of my PGDipHE students' potential.

As part of the university's suggested phased roll-out (acclimatisation) towards alternative modes of delivery, I chose to set up a *pre-course orientation programme* amongst the participating students in the module. This entailed a half-day orientation to the Zoom platform as a mode of delivery in what was then only a potentially temporary divergence from the normal delivery of the programme. In the orientation programme, I dealt with the Zoom

platform and its logistics of how to engage interactive participation. Perhaps this introductory curriculum strategy suggested my complicity in foregrounding the mode of delivery rather than focusing on the pedagogical interactivity. Therefore, in the acclimatisation session, I consciously emphasised the need to target engagement with reading and preparing for the interactive planned sessions in the forthcoming curriculum. I chose to simultaneously acclimatise the students to show multiple forms of mediation amongst themselves, and I would be a central feature of the curriculum interactivity.

A week before the orientation workshop, I shared links to YouTube video material on how to use Zoom so that participants could experiment with the technology before the session. I encouraged them to try the technology with their peers. I ensured that all features of the technological platform's interaction, which I had planned as part of the module programme, could be experimented with by each of the students. Each had an opportunity to learn 'to play with the technology' as a form of acclimatising. This included matters related to sharing presentations, using the audio and video features, and about the chat and reactions responses. I drew these orienting features from my participation in a recent Zoom online teaching workshop held as part of academic staff development. This was a technical orientation. I consciously chose to foreground that almost all of us, including myself, were using this new form of technological delivery for the first time, and that we were all likely to be able to learn the technical processes together. One of the students was already familiar with the Zoom platform, and he assisted as a 'teacher of the new technology'. This enabled the collaborative sharing of prospective learning/teaching responsibilities. (Unfortunately, shortly after that, he had to be hospitalised and was no longer part of the teaching/learning five-day programme. We all had to learn together as novices.)

A surprising concern confronted me early on in the delivery of the course module. My first attempt was to try to communicate with students using their official student email account addresses. Despite communication via email on these addresses, there was a limited response. It appeared that the lecturers/students did not habitually choose to engage in this anonymous institutionalised form of email, preferring to be directly contacted via their personal emails. This suggested that the lecturers were not comfortable logging into the UKZN website, activating their email amounts and setting up their interactivity with the communication networks therein. How was the intended

Moodle platform going to work, since the UKZN platform is directly linked to student email accounts?

I had to resort to WhatsApp communications to activate new personal email accounts, which immediately enabled interaction with me. I ascertained at this stage that all the students (i.e., the lecturers) were linked into social media networks. Setting up a WhatsApp group based on telephone contacts to communicate with the students was far more effective than using student registration numbers which automatically generated a unique UKZN student email address. Changing the strategy suggested the expectation that as the teacher, I had to make a conscious effort to connect to their technological, social world and literacy practices (Gee 1999). Overall, there was a preference for WhatsApp immediate communication rather than email communication.

This appears a trivial reflection, but it suggested that students were transferring the onus of 'delivering messages' onto the lecturer/teacher. Lecturers were expected to deliver learning at students' most comfortable convenience. I complied, knowing how difficult it was to establish interactivity under the insecurities surrounding the COVID-19 context. I also became aware that students were making a distinction in their preferences between being identified 'personally with a unique identity' rather than merely as 'a student number'. This opened me to the need to critically examine the *technological literacy practices* of my students. What choices of technological interactivity were students making within varied contexts, messages, audiences and purposes (Tour 2017)? (An aside: this helped me understand why for many years, my own undergraduate students ignored student email messages, which linked them to the Moodle websites of their modules. Very few chose to access the Moodle site that served as their repository for the course materials at that time[6]. Instead, they wanted me to spell out in person in the lecture hall, what must be done to engage with the course material.) Personal social interactivity was prioritised over the anonymous institutional identity (Barton 2017).

The intended module was a *week-long programme* consisting of several lectures and workshops which were designed to produce interactive learning amongst the learners. The input or interactive sessions lasted

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[6] I now also recognise that the level of interactivity of those former undergraduate Moodle sites, shared across numerous facilitators, lacked degrees of interactivity with students. They were instructive rather than pedagogically dialogical.

approximately one to two hours each, interspersed with section breaks for collaborative engagement, reflection and discussion. In the midst of the second day of the planned intervention of the programme, the official lockdown and restrictions on all access to workplaces were announced by the national authorities. This yielded a new challenge I had hardly anticipated. Firstly, we postponed, at the request of the students themselves, the following two days' delivery of the programme, and rescheduled it to allow them to prepare their homesteads for sanitation, isolation and social distancing. Many of the lecturers immediately confessed that they were nervous about the use of personal home computers or laptops to continue with their online pedagogical mode of delivery. They initially declared reasons such as poor connectivity in their localised rural areas.

It appeared to me that the lecturers were not accustomed to working on their personal computers within their homes. Most demarcated a clear separation between *work issues,* for which they used official university computers, and *home issues,* where they used home technological apparatus for personal and social matters. They raised the issue that they were not sure of the connectivity restriction in their homes, because they hardly used the computers at home for work-related academic issues. Given the urgency to vacate the campuses at short notice, these lecturers were not able to take their university computers home. This caused anxiety in terms of how they would access the planned new delivery unless they addressed issues relating to their technological apparatuses and practices at home. Surprisingly, within a short period of two days, all the students were able to activate the necessary logistics to reconnect to a home delivery mode. What changed to re-acclimatise them?

I raise these operational details on a matter of principle, rather than one of logistics. There appears to be a mindset about the *demarcation of space* where academic work is undertaken. Clearly, for many of the lecturers/ students, affordability of separate technological devices within their office (perhaps paid for by their employers) and their personal computers at home (possibly paid for by themselves) was not the issue. I was indeed surprised because my own academic work responsibilities often spill into working long extended hours on many 'university work-related matters' (marking, preparing, supervising) in my home environment after so-called working hours, and on weekends. I was surprised that the demarcation of work hours and personal hours was much more clearly bounded in many of these lecturers' worldviews. Could the issue relate to the technological literacies practices of family mem-

bers and their use of computers? Who could use the home computer and for what? When? How? Why? How was this use negotiated within the home environment? This presumes that one had to account for a range of participants who were likely to seek access to the computer within the home environment.

It emerged that the issue was not about whether there was access to the internet within their home contexts: it was that there were *habituated practices* about where work issues were to be engaged. This is perhaps an over-generalisation to make the point. Each specific home and family context, and personal access to computers needs further exploration.

Interestingly, throughout the interactive continued programme, I became aware of how the merging of the *personal and the public space* that the new pedagogical platform activated, interfered with the lecturers' degree of comfort. They initially reflected some degree of anxiety when the Zoom camera was able to access sounds from their personal spaces such as family interactions, neighbours talking, dogs barking and the like. This pedagogical mode was thus a coerced invitation into their everyday personal worlds, something that perhaps is usually disconnected from the public spaces of academic work. Not all were comfortable with sharing this degree of intimacy.

For me, acclimatisation is thus not merely restricted to knowing how to manipulate the technical, operational world of the Zoom platform we were engaging. It included exposing one's personal self within the pedagogical self. The negotiated technological literacy practices of lecturers at work, at home, and with their family members, need much more detailed analysis and exploration. Over time, I became aware that there was more relaxed interaction as the focus shifted from the contextual spatiality of the environment towards an *interactive pedagogical spatiality* of the programme. This became evident on one occasion when the peer group challenged one of the music lecturers to begin the class by rendering a musical song. By day four, he willingly conceded, including setting up his electric piano to accompany his songs. There was much satisfaction in the group who joined in the singing. This felt like a creative outlet for the release of the pedagogical anxieties of participating in this module.

Another acclimatisation occurred in this process of the new delivery mode. Students became increasingly aware of how much *self-preparation* was needed before the commencement of the lecture/workshop. The design of the module programme used the principles of the 'flipped classroom' (McLaughlin, Mary, Roth *et al.* 2014), where students were expected to read and engage

with materials in preparation for the classroom face-to-face activity. This pedagogical strategy included a blended form of asynchronous learning and synchronous pedagogy/teaching (Rowe 2020). Therefore, it was expected that students engage at their own pace with the targeted material outside the regular time slot of the face-to-face synchronous contexts (Bergmann & Sams 2012). For example, they were expected to read and deliver their responses to the YouTube videos links on their course outlines. If prior preparation was not done, they were not able to engage in any depth.

In addition, the students were expected to make a *selection of reference materials* to demarcate a possible target for a particular assignment topic. One of the module assignments was to develop an action research learning intervention to address a perceived problematic area of their pedagogy in higher education. The workshop input session briefly recapped what an action research cycle entailed. However, more emphasis was placed on the students themselves talking about the problems they had chosen to focus on, and verbally engaging with their peers about the intervention strategies they would likely adopt, as well as how they would monitor the action cycle progress. The course content was being 'delivered' by the inputs of the students themselves.

Similarly, an interactive workshop was conducted online to assist in developing an academic poster for a conference outlining a key challenge of realising the goals of their institutional mission and vision in relation to their specific disciplines and positionalities. This entailed a pre-session of asynchronously watching a YouTube video on designing an academic poster. Thereafter, in the Zoom platform space, the students gave an oral presentation of their posters in a simulated conference. The conference audience consisted of the students participating in the programme which engaged in interactions and posed questions. After the session, the students were able to redesign their submitted posters.

In my view, what these different pedagogical strategies activated was not much different from what would have usually been presented had the course been delivered in a face-to-face pedagogy. Nevertheless, it meant that students had to first overcome the fear of using the online technological, operational devices before they could concentrate on the quality of interactivity between peers and the lecturer. Over the week, they become more familiar with the modes of delivery. The lecturer plays a pivotal role in ensuring that the focus is on the quality of learning, not the modes of technological delivery, or simplistically on staged performances of academic activity.

On the penultimate day, an interactive interview was conducted between myself and the quality assurance director at my institution. Besides foregrounding the content matter about the scope of quality assurance and promotions systems in the higher education sector, this interview aimed to demonstrate the kinds of reflective interactions between an academic (myself) and the representative from the institutional administrative sections. By this stage in the programme, students were a lot more acclimatised to the levels of interactivity required in the module delivery, even using alternative technological modes. Both presenters of the interview were impressed with the levels of interaction that mediated how students participated in the course. What this required was several pauses in the lengthy interview to allow students to intervene to ask for clarity. The interactivity aided by the Zoom platform allowed them greater ease of 'interruptions' and 'disruptions' when issues were not apparent, or even when they disagreed.

The hidden message was that *senior administrators of the university could be engaged with dialogically*. As a facilitator, I mediated the kinds of modes of asking questions of the interviewee. The platform allowed students to repair and correct their forms of engagement and questions, allowing for a great deal of acclimatisation of how to be active participants in their own learning. My personal reflection is that this technological platform indeed produced more significant levels of interactivity than if the interview had been conducted in the normal face-to-face pedagogies. The latter has conventions of politeness and adherence to time-bounded formats of inputs. The technological mode allowed for far greater interactivity and perhaps more appropriate levels of engagement by the students. Compliments are due to the quality assurance director who welcomed the interactive, contested and probing pedagogies.

My overall view is that the pedagogical space became progressively more relaxed as the focus shifted from the technology towards foregrounding interest in learning deeply from the interaction of the learning/teaching moment. Students were present not merely to mark the attendance register. Over time, they acclimatised into the 'technological space', *not only as a performance space where one was being assessed*. As the facilitator of the teaching project, I drew on my personal experience of noting that all learners choose to drift in and out of participation (for a range of reasons). My role as the host of the platform allowed me to 'haul them back into the classroom interactivity learning mode'. This meant that students tended to be more alert since they were unlikely to predict when I would choose to ask them for their

opinion on a particular matter. It reinforced the comment made here that the principal-agent that activates quality learning is not the technology alone, but the teacher, who is the mediator of that technology with his or her learners.

In summary, I learnt several conceptions of what acclimatisation meant. As the facilitator of the new model of pedagogy, I had to consciously embrace the responsibility of learning new technological modalities as a form of self-staff-development. I had to engage with a conscious orientation programme to induct students into the latest modalities, especially allying their own fears of the lack of technical expertise as a learning barrier; the focus of such orientation was to shift emphasis from the form of delivery to the purpose/substance of the interactive engagement needed in higher education postgraduate learning. I had to become familiar with the range of technological literacy practices of the students, especially understanding their preferences for the specific and more personal (e.g., WhatsApp), rather than institutional modes (Moodle platforms). I had to consciously alter the pace of delivery to allow for technical disruptions ushered in by poor interconnectivity and power cuts, and embrace a diverse range of technological modalities simultaneously. This included responding to shifting national policy regulations demarcating systemic policies and operations which activated lengthy hours of preparation, negotiation and renegotiation of the plans using multiple technological modalities. I became acclimatised to how lecturers in higher education (specifically the students of the PGDipHE) had demarcated notions of the spaces where 'official university work' is conducted, establishing clear boundaries between 'office work' and 'home work' spaces. I became more familiar with how the new technological Zoom meetings modes blurred the boundaries between the 'public space' of the classroom and the 'personal spaces' of everyday home activities, and that the new modalities were not always invitational spaces sometimes impacting on producing anxieties. I became aware of how students need to be consciously stimulated to become 'active rather than passive pedagogical agents', developing autonomy and agency for their own learning. I overtly challenged students that the technological space was not a 'performance space for assessment alone', but a space for engaging the quality of learning and creation of new knowledges. I believe that the interactive space allowed students to re-imagine the possibilities of interactivity between students, lecturers and managers at the varying levels of the institutionalised higher education system. All of these acclimatisations yielded for me a view that the new mode of delivery probably

activated deep epistemological reconsiderations of the higher education learning, which was particularly relevant for this group of postgraduate students. Thankfully, the external moderator of the module commended the degree of interactive support afforded to students and the organisation of the pedagogical module to achieve its declared outcomes.

I now turn to the matter of the shifts in attitude that are required when engaging the new normal.

4 On Attitude

I am concerned that many of my lecturer peers seem to approach the shift towards new forms of pedagogy as a temporary measure to deal with the COVID-19 times. There is an underlying assumption that there will be a resumption of the old normal. The attitude is one of present fatalistic abandonment to a forced pedagogical approach which they will soon abort, 'once the doom is all over'. However, I am inspired by the work of Harari (2018), who cautions that the advancements in knowledge systems, especially the link between biotechnological knowledge and technological computational, algorithmic analysis, are rapidly likely to usher into the new world a permanent state of revolutions. He skilfully argues that many present-day occupations will possibly soon become irrelevant as non-human computers, drawing on Artificial Intelligence (AI), are able to know us humans better than we know ourselves. He suggests this is anathema for the liberalist who believes in the transcendence of the individual self, and has a mistaken belief (his argument) in their innate ability to know and make the best selective choices for themselves. Algorithmic predictions will be able to make more reliable conclusions about individuals' preferences with regard to products, people and perspectives.

AI systems will be able to alert humans to the prospect of predictive diagnostic ailments even before the individual reflects an overt symptom of the impending disease which directs them to a health practitioner. This will radicalise whole sectors which have built up edifices of professional practices that rely on 'the knowing self'. For example, doctors will become less relevant, as AI will be able to make more accurate predictions about our physical well-being. Similarly, Harari (2018) argues that many other occupations will become irrelevant and that there would be a need for individuals to reinvent themselves, as has been characteristic over the history of time following the

aftermaths of major worldwide revolutions. He argues that, when the foundational rationales around which society are restructured, this activates a need for a wide-scale reimagining of many occupations.

The new revolutionary era is, however, not likely to stabilise and endure over long periods of time, as was the case in the Agricultural or the Industrial Revolution. Instead, the new Technological Revolution is likely to activate a series of exponential catalytical revolutions in short bursts of time and spaces. It is likely that information networks (where available) will relatively easily permeate geographic boundaries to introduce ever-changing, perpetual demands and inputs on new knowledge globally. Potentially, the knowledge produced in 2020 is likely to be outdated by 2025. In turn, this new knowledge will become obsolete five years later. Who knows what 2050 will look like? We can imagine that it will be fundamentally different from what we have today.

This will escort onto the world stage a need for new reinventions in continual re-imaginative potential. Furthermore, Harari (2018) argues that the distance between higher education systems, the marketplace and parliament will become increasingly closer. The knowledge system that is being produced within the university structures of higher education is likely to be increasingly influenced by demands presented by broader social networks. Increasingly, governments will expect that knowledge systems service their agenda. The marketplace will also make increased demands on university systems as the 'products' of the university need to find employment to service the need to design new goods and services to keep abreast with new expectations and repeated knowledge explosions. Whether or not the scientific knowledge enterprise will be compromised in this agenda, remains a moot point. It may be argued that university autonomy and scientific knowledge production have never been independent of the forces of the powerful, whether of the religious authorities or the captains of industry. What this entails, is preparation for an *attitudinal strategic rethinking* of the relations of collaboration between multiple stakeholders, especially universities, which usually guard their independence jealously.

This has further implications for the attitude that lecturers themselves have towards the knowledges that they presently defend, curate and preserve. Knowledge systems will likely be even more transient and responsive to these multiple agendas in a rapidly evolving era. A new attitude towards a *plurality of discourses* will be expected as university knowledge producers will need to

question their ethical role in how they share their knowledge, develop their research agendas, and contribute to the quality of society they wish to uphold.

Harari (2018) is suggesting that the new normal should introduce a new attitude towards knowledge. The rapid expansion of technological systems is likely to raise further questions that have not yet been thought about. Similarly, professions are likely to be created that have not yet been conceptualised. There will be an increasing need to question why students should be required to enrol at universities at all, when new technological inventors and programmers could draw their competences elsewhere through less formalised institutional processes. These new technologists are likely to be the cutting-edge Game Changers. He suggests that it will be critical to developing amongst higher education students a prospective disposition towards the knowledge systems with which they engage. Students should be introduced to existing bodies of knowledge as mirages, which shift continually as we move our perspectives and positionalities. Uncertainties will lead paradoxically to increased interest in finding more significant levels of predictabilities. Hence, Harari predicts the possibility that technology and AI are likely to have an increased presence in knowledge-making enterprises both outside and within higher education.

University lecturers will need to instil amongst learners/students how to make ethical choices which serve the best interests of the broader social system, not in narrow individualistic supremacies of rampant profitabilities, partisan, nationalistic and/or politically expedient ways. The new students should be aware that as human beings, we have the potential to make 'big' choices amongst the available expanding bodies of knowledges. The challenges of nuclear war and global climate change are critical meta-level global crises that the international community should be addressing. However, the present context is still preoccupied with old century values of nationalisms and ideological differences. There is a need to develop an attitudinal mind-shift towards developing ambassadors, not careerist occupations. One ought to be preparing university students to establish *agendas of ethical and global proportions*. A further challenge is perhaps how we interpret the COVID-19 pandemic. A competitive comparability regime currently prevails, where each nation/ geographic provincial context is defending its own borders. Where are the *global champions of collaborative interactivity* referred to in the introduction to this chapter?

This *philosophical recommissioning of mindsets* allows university

lecturers to develop broader conceptions of whose imperatives about knowledge engagement currently drive our higher education systems. It suggests that we cannot be limited in our preoccupation with mundane matters of, for example, assignment handing-in modalities, administrative regulations and controls, managing large classes, and the massification of the education system. These operational considerations have their place, but cannot be our primary agenda. Our preoccupation, as higher education specialists, should ascend into larger forces of a meta-analysis of our current routinised operations. Our education system has always embraced degrees of distance between the world of yesterday and the world of the future. Indeed, the immediate plan is to harness a collective attitude shift about our roles and responsibilities as higher education specialists. We have to re-imagine how we negotiate our relationships with broader social systems, the marketplace and parliament. We need to work with how transitory our own knowledge systems are, especially as they become increasingly outdated and updated.

5 Closing Comments

The COVID-19 pandemic lockdown have indeed caused a revolutionary destabilising of the routines of our everyday world of university education. It has assisted lecturers and students in reassessing the values we hold dear and allowed us to re-question the foundational principles which underpin our practices. It has allowed us to (re)learn our teaching. On a mundane level, it has required that university lecturers find a balance between the technology, their pedagogy and the content knowledges of our present times. On a more profound level, this operational world will soon become unravelled by the dawn of a future era of multiple uncertainties and pluralities of technological revolutions. We are learning about our beliefs about knowledge, about our levels of under-preparedness to tackle the new world of a technological revolution. But we have to re-educate ourselves to tackle what to do when we do not know what to do. Subtly, yet forcibly, the world has come to question whether our defensive borders can easily be eroded as the new viruses of change need no official passports for travel. We migrate into new ways of being confident that we are uncertain, and we do not know the future. Our disciplines, our knowledges of defined cultures, races, sexualities, nation-hoods will all come to be reconfigured. Nevertheless, we know that our disposition to find forever-new-ways-of-being will be our legacy for

generations to come. Our success will not lie in whether we graduate hordes of existing graduates, or how we prop up our nationalistic or disciplinary pride or geographed xenophobic or culturally-bounded prejudices. It will be if we can produce ethical beings who champion the cause of global imperatives. New opportunities await our efforts.

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Learning to Teach Differently

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1 Introduction

Experience with the Hindu caste-system shows that it was in the interest of the ruling castes to keep the so-called under-castes, out-castes and the remnants of the Austro-Asiatic tribals, away from intellectual labor, and indeed punish them for exercising it, encourage obedience, so that perception of the importance of the right to intellectual labor, the exercise of memory, and the access to abstract analysis, was millennially lost for the average person. This is an historical crime. The trained teacher must learn, usually with no hope of success in the short run, how to access such deliberately damaged cognitive-machines (imagination intact, intelligence fully alive in children), so that intellectual labor, unattached to definite goals, can begin to operate.

Shifting the ground to the United States (US), I have commented over the last few decades of teaching and writing, on W. E. B Du Bois' lifelong effort to achieve this in a less rule-driven socius than caste[1]. The only 'advantage'(!) of the situation of chattel slavery in the US is that it is relatively recent (1619), and people from African civilizations were regularly brought in through the slave trade. Chattel slavery in South Africa seems to have started forty years later and was not, by law, long-lasting. But of course, racialized class oppression, legalized as apartheid, did not alter the terms of cognitive damage, of a full divorce from disinterested intellectual labor, without which there is no democracy. And there is enough discussion of the situation in South Africa today to know that without a practice of freedom, changing the law does not produce an internalization of the social contract. The short-term policy is enforcement, the long-term, learning to learn to teach differently.

Experience of teaching at élite universities in so-called developed

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[1] Refer specifically to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *My Brother Burghardt*, Harvard University Press, forthcoming.

countries shows that the right to intellectual labor is not prized by the average student in that context either. I am teaching with an old-fashioned 'benevolent' white male teacher of Mathematics this semester. I do not, of course, treat one case as representative. But I am realizing daily how much 'learning to teach differently' is on the agenda at the STEM-ridden corporatist top. So, I repeat what seems to me an obvious requirement: focus, not only on the average, but even the 'worst' student, through the average. And yes, there is a 'worst', not always catchable through the multiple-choice evaluative schemes. Those schemes, with accompanying tool-kits, make the task impossible, by making it easy. The 'worst' has to be treated with affection, if that is what s/he seems to require, especially our patience at sharing their problems and drawing out a solution from them with infinite patience.

On the other hand, the 'worst' may have to be treated with firmness and a slight bit of fake contempt, if this is what seems right for an interested teacher from the worst living environment. In other words, we have to do some research into the microstructure of the worsts' daily give-and-take (textuality in the sense of many-stranded textile?), in order to achieve something like a result into the subjectship of democracy – a rearrangement of desires. Very often, the class-difference between teachers and students makes this impossible. That is a greater barrier than COVID-19, which is the immediate efficient cause for learning to teach differently, and also produces a barrier. Zoom-teaching is bad and restrictive, but not prohibit-tively so. Deconstruction took the touchy-feelie out of me. I go to my village schools for my own training into this background-testing, and to show that there is no problem if a Brahmin lives with untouchables (although this conviction is hard to generate). And there, Zoom is inaccessible. But 'Zoom' can be fun if it does not make us transform the actual teaching material into a mechanical book club game. There is much to say here but it would be better 'said' one-and-one, perhaps even in a Zoomed classroom, for example, keeping the classroom as much like a classroom as possible, sharing a screen with the actual texts. However, without the micrology, the textuality of the students' environment, we cannot begin to try to teach differently.

Otherwise, all we have is top-down policy (public sector) and philanthropy (private sector) as the preferred methodology for confronting the underprivileged (racialized and otherwise), as a result. At the time of this writing, in my hometown, New York City, BlackLivesMatter is attempting to correct this methodology. In the specifically South African context, as it is

available to an international viewership of a certain class and inclination, BBC World News regales the viewer with a constant horror show of the desperate condition of the hospitals facing the pandemic. Here the short-term solution is redistributive policy. But, to quote Sharon Ife Charles, who works with drug addicts and gang members in New York, they will 'revert' if we do not keep up a sustained teaching differently, of which she gives examples. And I will say again what you know well: changing laws does not change minds. It is just that there is the law, but law, alas, is not justice. Whole populations must be trained persistently, generation after generation, to want to have good healthcare for everyone, a bourgeoisification, no doubt, which must also be sustained with training the imagination not to think of the goals of the bourgeois revolution as the bottom line. Du Bois tried this double project at Atlanta University, but Booker T. Washington's competitiveness undid the project. So, our learning to teach differently must learn to supplement bourgeoisification with training against unrestrained self-interest – a restraint on the basic human affect of greed. This is matter for one-on-one collective class-rooming, Zoom or otherwise. Here I give an example.

Anthony Appiah, in his superbly researched book on Du Bois, suggests that the Folk in the title and the content of the book comes from the German Volk, given Du Bois' feeling of general liberation in the two years he spent in Berlin at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität[2]. I myself feel that Volk was aufgehoben or sublated by Du Bois, negated and preserved on a different register. If we wish to look at the German colonial 'comparativist' use of 'Volk', we might consider the contribution of Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute to help those colonials' 'goal … to make cotton production in Togo a "Volkskultur", a people's culture, and not, as elsewhere in the German colonial empire, a "Plantagenkultur", a plantation culture'[3]. 'Culturing' here is part of bourgeoisification.

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[2] Kwame Anthony Appiah. *Lines of Descent: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Emergence of Identity* (2014).

[3] *Der Tropenpanzer: Zeitschrift für tropische Landwirtschaft* 7 (January 1903: 9) cited in Beckert (2014). Beckert's entire chapter, 'Destructions', is worth reading to prove our point. Gramsci had surmised such civilizing-mission uses of African-Americans. In the rural area where I run some schools, German-Bengalis subsidize the incorporation of local agriculture into European agri-business. They are our *Volk* and share a mother-tongue. One of the problems

Actually, what happened to Du Bois as he thought of claiming his 'folk', was more like a disciplinary change, moving from disciplinary history (*The Suppression of the African Slave Trade*, 1894) and a work that may be described as creating the field of qualitative/quantitative sociology (*The Philadelphia Negro*, 1899)[4]. I direct my reader to something else Anthony Appiah wrote, in his role as an ethics advisor for *The New York Times*: 'Go Ahead, Speak for Yourself', where you can find this nice sentence:

> Professor Spivak once tartly remarked, 'the question "Who should speak" is less crucial than "Who will listen?"'[5]

And, with his third book, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) Du Bois moved into the Humanities, so that Black folk, and indeed, white folk would listen, whereas they would not listen to specialized books of history and sociology.

The need for this move came from a publishing house, A.C. McClurg and Company. As Herbert Aptheker shows in his Introduction to the *Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois was the most important African-American ethico-political intellectual in the United States, and had been writing a stream of powerful reviews and articles in important journals[6]. It fell to McClurg to ask him to collect some essays. I will show below how the collection really makes the reader literally listen ('who will listen?'), through the use of music, to the humanity of an other 'race'.

Without knowing this, it is not possible to comprehend fully, the sources producing *Souls*, nor the full significance of the very title of a book affirming the humanity of a people which dominant thought held to be rather more animal than human.

The book finds a way in its rhetoric to involve the reader in what is

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with the Tuskegee men, one generation from slavery, was that they did not speak Ewe.

[4] Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade in the United States of America, 1638-1870.* ([1896]1975); and *The Philadelphia Negro* ([1899]1973).

[5] A version of this article appears in print on 12 August 2018, Section SR, p.1 of the New York edition with the headline: 'Speaking as a ….'.

[6] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* ([1903] 1973: 7-10); hereafter cited as *SBF*, followed by page number.

called focalizing. Do this for the text, it says to the reader. This is a teaching text and so shifts the focus to the actual work of reading through the rhetorical signals in the little book-instrument. I will show how *Souls of Black Folk* invites the reader to focalize. Du Bois' staged implied reader is left somewhat unspecified, deliberately I daresay. But the famous sentence in italics is clearly addressed to a white audience, appropriate today, 117 years later, at a Black Lives Matter protest:

> Let the ears of a guilty people tingle with truth, and seventy million sigh for the righteousness which exalteth nations, in this drear day when human brotherhood is a mockery and a snare (*SBF* 265).

In the front material of the book, Du Bois offers his Black-veil identity as the narrative identity holding together scattered papers published elsewhere:

> Some of these thoughts of mine have seen the light before in other guise. For kindly consenting to their republication here, in altered and extended form, I must thank the publishers of the Atlantic Monthly, The World's Work, the Dial, The New World, and the Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science…need I add that I who speak here am bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of them that live within the Veil? (*SBF* viii).

Aptheker reminds us that Du Bois wanted to write something strongly critical of Booker T. Washington's Atlanta Compromise, which wanted to train Blacks into legalized greed, viz., entrepreneurship, at best. Aptheker also shows us that he included quite a few unpublished pieces and re-titled and revised the pre-published ones. Yet, and this is important, he staged the narrator simply as flesh of the flesh and bone of the bone of those who live within the veil. As we move into the text, where the rhetoric beckons and directs us, we must remember that the reader's empty slot will be filled with more and more diversified types as history moves and the narrator will be determined by the reader's ability to respond robustly to the text's rhetoric, inviting their imagination to go on an adventure. For the disenfranchised student in South Africa, can the teacher plan such an adventure?

As a teacher, Du Bois was altogether systematic, as his notebook for the subaltern elementary school where he taught for two summers demon-

strates[7]. At Wilberforce and Atlanta, he was brilliant but stern, even scary. But in his writing after *Souls*, after the humanities turn, so to speak, his writing will be to make folks listen. His greatest book of history, *Black Reconstruction* (1935), will be no exception. In what follows, I offer a reading of *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), as a teaching reading through listening text. In my book I go on, of course, to an analysis of the content, but here I withhold that analysis[8]. Here I want to confront the problem of reading music, which the cognitively damaged South African 'worst' student might find ridiculous, and identify-cation with US enslaved history is also problematic, especially since the teaching style I am thinking of is not information imposition, but making epistemological performance emerge, teacher/student imaginative activism braided together with effort, difficulty, necessary and impossible.

The Reading

Here is the reading then, up for your transformation, written here for those who read Spivak's books.

As I follow through the rhetorical outline which will spell out the instruction or invitation to the reader to focalize *The Souls of Black Folk*, I notice, like all readers and scholars, that the epigraphs to the first thirteen chapters are double, each containing a verbal text by a well-known member of white Euro-US culture, and a line of notation given for an excerpt from a spiritual – in Du Bois's language, a sorrow song – where the verbal text is not quoted. As Eric Lanquister has pointed out, these notations are actually taken from existing collections, and as Craig Harris has noted, it is not the hymns themselves, some of which can be traced back to England, but what enslaved Africans did with them. That aesthetic, that spirit of possession and re-creation, inhabiting the past as the readers' present, is the key here. Rhetorically, however, they are also an invitation to the presumably white US reader to

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[7] Given the Covid-19 pandemic at the time of revising, I cannot access this notebook, lying mis-catalogued in a drawer full of disorganized papers in Du Bois's final collection of books and papers at the Du Bois Centre for Pan-African Culture in Accra, Ghana. Given the sorry state f the collection, I cannot guarantee that a future researcher will be able to get to it.

[8] Parts of this piece are taken from my forthcoming book, *My Brother Burghardt*, Harvard University Press.

whom at least that searing next-to-last sentence in The After-Thought is addressed, to 'perform' the sorrow song in the anonymity of subaltern possession, only the tune. Rhetorically, a bar of notation is an invitation to read the music as music. If political fiction is actively political insofar as it finds a way in its rhetoric to involve the reader in focalizing, shifting the focus to the reading work, this is where *Souls* is active in its politics. Dream work. Later, we will briefly look at the imperfect reasonableness of the book's content, its waking text, as it were. Whatever that overt burden, in this framing the text translates, transforms, transfers and reterritorializes a performative element of subaltern Negro life, the tune, into élite performance, the reader receiving an invitation to read the music, no words. The reader must focus his or her voice, even if silently, and perform what has for so long been a subaltern performative. If you cannot read European notation, you cannot participate in the text. How can you make the disenfranchised reader imagine herself into that uncaring Euro-US reader learning performance?

(I cannot read European notations. No doubt Du Bois could. It is the imagined implied reader. And the readership changes.)

But this is not all. Chapter 14 brings the sorrow song out onto the stage. As Aptheker points out, this was freshly written for *Souls* (SBF 10). It now shows the latent rhetorical movement of the text in a more manifest fashion. The burden is to bring the performative performance play as a successful narrative in the last chapter, the title of which is 'The Sorrow Song'. Slowly through these chapters, the sorrow song emerges into the waking text, as it were. The verbal text in the epigraph there is, 'I walk through the churchyard to lay this body down', not contrasted to a Euro-US verbal text, from Schiller, for example, or Simmons. And in place of the author, we see the words: 'Negro Song.' The subaltern group is shown to have brought itself into an authorial position. (I hope the teacher will walk the student through the formal analogy with the historical claim made by Du Bois more than thirty years later for the contraband agent of the general strike: the 'fugitive slaves' joining the Union army of Lincoln downing tools and withdrawing from the plantation economy.) And then, with the subaltern group now moved into agency, *Souls* matches verbal text to music. This is for the reader who, through the thirteen earlier chapters, has carefully followed the invitation to focalize performance.

Du Bois matches verbal text to music, latent into manifest, dreamworking into the fragile clarity of a reasonable continuity, text and narrative coming together by way of the epigraphs. This entire chapter is a discussion of

the sorrow songs with many quotations, and at least two of them matching words to notation, again indicative of the rhetorical movement of the entire book. But this line, the rhetorical use of the sorrow song from performative to performance, emerging into the public text with words matching notation, is the entry into rhetorical unity with an indication of progression. The heterogeneous content is nestled within this continuity or unity achieved through imaginative activism, epistemological performance, reader-training into a reparation for which the disenfranchised South African student must perform an imaginative shift. She must imagine that loss of Africa happening to the enslaved centuries ago.

For the most extraordinary moment in this paragraph in this last chapter is the untranslatable song, which makes the reader shiver, from '[m]y grandfather's grandmother … seized by an evil Dutch trader two centuries ago; and coming to the valleys of the Hudson and Housatonic, black, little, and lithe, she shivered and shrank in the harsh north winds, looked longingly at the hills, and often crooned a heathen melody to the child between her knees, thus'. This is, of course, Africa imagined. 'The child sang it to his children and they to their children's children, knowing as little as our fathers what its words may mean, but knowing well the meaning of its music. This was primitive African music ... – the voice of exile' (*SBF* 254-5). And then those words with music, provided for me by the magisterial piano of Yohann Ripert.

If you put this link in a browser, the Julliard pianist's reproduction of (un)remembered Africa will sound forth:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XMVXMbMjugafBcHjXPsPwMlBPOIatW8U/view?usp=sharing [9].

The lesson to the reader is now complete. The author is African-American, united as American with differently hyphenated Euro-US men, hearing the song as at once heathen and primitive, and divided from them as African-American, for the meaning of the music is clear to the children, even though the words were not. Double consciousness.

Let us now see how the question of woman has to be excavated through paying attention to the rhetorical structure of this extraordinary account. The woman at the origin is the repository of culture, singing a song, if David Levering Lewis is to be credited, where she asks to be saved from the hole into which she has fallen, presumably (since the last line is paratactic), by a

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[9] I thank Surya Parekh for making the URL.

circumcised son[10]. She articulates the protective role of a boy-child just initiated into manhood, calling for her savior. The child at her knee as she sings is a boy: 'he sang it to his children'. And the ones who carry it through into a history that can finally notate it into European music, are 'our fathers'. Nahum Dimitri Chandler has marked her as, 'She appears, if she can be said to appear at all, as an absence, or under the sign of absence, an invisible X, perhaps' (101) (in Spivak 2021). On this my comment has been that the other X for him produces an entire book, whose title is *X – The Problem of the Negro as A Problem for Thought*, whereas this woman as X is simply an instrument for the conversion of song to male history. We might compare Aunt Betsy in the Black Flame trilogy, Du Bois's final novels, a fierce woman who is in touch with African culture, officiates at birth and death with powerful blood-rituals, but otherwise remains close to plantation aristocracy, full of mentoring for her male descendants. How to fit gendering into the students' heterogeneous circumstances without lecturing, is always a challenge.

This section ends with the full notation of a song that takes us out of the text onto a walk into a future to come. This traveler, too is male. The reader trained by the book watches him and hears himself sing a song that leads both traveler and reader outside the book. This reader ends with an exhortation added by Du Bois as he revised the first essay from its initial journal publication: 'And now what I have briefly sketched in large outline let me on coming pages tell again in many ways, with loving emphasis and deeper detail, that men may listen to the striving in the souls of black folk'. Listen.

There is no direct line from knowing to doing. When the University of Coimbra did me the undeserved honor of inaugurating their PhD program in Social Sciences, I gave them the title: 'Study, Know, Learn, Hear, Listen, Do?' with a question mark at the end.

I told my colleagues there that I would dwell on each cognitive position, that the hard one was the necessity to move from knowing to learning. Knowing through study must of course be done very well, but there the object of investigation is just that, an object. To move to learning the object of investigation must itself become something like a subject, and only that can lead to a change in practice. Our formulaic description is a prayer to be haunted. The humanities, I wrote to them, emphasized the cognitive variations reflected in the title. How can these variations enhance our work as a means to

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[10] Cited in Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* ([1903] 2007: 220).

an imaginative activism that allows for the epistemological performance required by those of us who work within the possibility of institutional validation for ourselves and our students and think about democracy?

Try this out, then. Move *Souls* from knowing to learning through listening. Stage an African-American struggling with Africa and an African language as it is unachievable within personal memory, given that disenfranchised South African students, in Africa, speaking one or two of thirty-five languages as well as Afrikaans and English, are not often asked to think beyond their rights into equality with the dissimilar. Let us talk about it and learn to learn, in different ways.

Conclusion: CODA

Gilles Deleuze wrote this passage about four years before he took his life because of an intolerable lung disease:

> If the three ages of the concept are the encyclopedia, pedagogy, and commercial professional training, only the second can safeguard us from falling from the heights of the first into the disaster of the third- an absolute disaster for thought, whatever its benefits might be, of course, from the viewpoint of universal capitalism[11].

I call these words from Sophonia M. Mofokeng's *Pelong ya ka* (translated as *In My Heart*), written in Sesotho, recommended to a Zulu son by his father in the 60s – a brief indication of the book's encyclopedist impulse: collectivist details of what we are[12]. Simon Gikandi, based in Gikuyu has demonstrated that in this text, Mofokeng, the first Black PhD from the University of Witwatersrand, tries the epistemological performance of staging the 'ordinary':

The heart is powerful. That is why we Basotho talk about it so much. When a person is eating, and the food does not go down well, when he feels nauseous, he says: 'This food does not go down well. It is sitting on my heart',

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[11] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (1994: 12).

[12] Sophonia M. Mofokeng, *In My Heart* ([2021]), forthcoming. The father-to-son recommendation was given to me in private conversation. Gikandi's comment is to be found in the Introduction to the book.

or 'My heart is bilious'. Perhaps a glutton is sitting next to us, a person who is never satiated, who keeps eating greedily, eating with eyes wide open as if food will run away. We steal a glance at one another, and when he turns around the corner, one of us says: 'Hey people! what a big heart he, banna!'

Even in revelry, when we are happy, we keep on talking about it, not least in sorrow. How can it not rear its head in such conversation, whereas joy and sorrow are two sides of the coin of our lives? Something has happened which makes you happy, and you say that it has whitened your heart, it has cleansed it and it is pure. Ah, a clean thing is like snow, it is pure white.

I believe it is time to turn this encyclopedist impulse into pedagogy. We take the young women and men on the streets of South Africa not as 'disenfranchised', but as 'ordinary', – merely ontic, if you need a sexy word. Remembering that enabling students for income production is not the humanities teachers' only task; we train their imagination toward non-resembling others, and bring forward the French philosopher's English, globalized for another 'we'.

If the three ages of the concept are the encyclopedia, pedagogy, and commercial professional training, only the second can safeguard us from falling from the heights of the first into the disaster of the third – an absolute disaster for thought, whatever its benefits might be, of course, from the viewpoint of universal capitalism.

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Sustaining Education in a VUCA World: Experiences of Higher Education (Re)Designers of School Curricula in Mauritius

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Abstract

The outbreak of Covid-19 has shaken the foundations the education system. Since the first industrial revolution, schooling has been founded on students physically attending classes. The decision to close schools and universities around the globe has significantly unsettled the routine of stakeholders in education: policy makers, educators, learners, and parents. Whilst many schools and universities have embraced the use of online teaching and learning to address the challenge, policy makers are struggling to find strategies to cater for all learners. The policy makers in Mauritius have chosen to take recourse in television programmes to broadcast lessons for different subject areas at primary and secondary levels, targeting a larger community of learners in contexts where substantial number of learners possibly do not have access to technology and internet. This chapter reports on the effects of policy responses towards the unprecedented 'de-schooling'. However, to take full advantage of the different formats and modalities of media and to avoid pitfalls that could result from its limitations, several factors including curricula, technology,

educators and students' preparedness must be carefully considered and balanced. Learning through media requires different sets of dispositions from the teachers and learners who are used to learning within the four walls of the classroom. We, the authors of this paper, were called upon to design the television programmes referred to, although we hold another set of beliefs, quite different from the policy maker. Our experiences while designing the television programmes led us to oscillate between diametrically opposed positions (as characterised by the metamodern context), and feelings such as working with sincerity and irony, given two sets of technological practices and approaches, television and the digital world. This paper is based on a *bricolage* of methodologies. It includes personal experiences designers of the television programme captured in vignettes. The data also consists of interviews learners and parents, and elements of netnography that discuss online education in these troubled times. We end by discussing the possibilities for a new educational model that could suit a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world.

Keywords: Policy makers, teaching, learning, metamodernism, VUCA, technology

1 Introduction

Since the advent of mass schooling after the First Industrial Revolution, several disasters like war and climate change have disrupted the education of millions of children worldwide. In 2020, the outbreak of COVID-19 has taken its toll on the modern schooling system. According to the latest statistics, the COVID-19 pandemic has compelled 1.53 billion learners to be out of school and 184 country-wide school closures (Education Cannot Wait 2020). Government and private systems are mobilized to cater for the critical services such as health and sanitation. The educational needs of learners are also addressed during the pandemic because most of the governments around the globe have taken the decision to shut down educational institutions in order to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 (UNESCO 2020). These sudden interruptions to education may have long terms implications.

Figure 1 provides a global indication of the impact of COVID-19 on education worldwide.
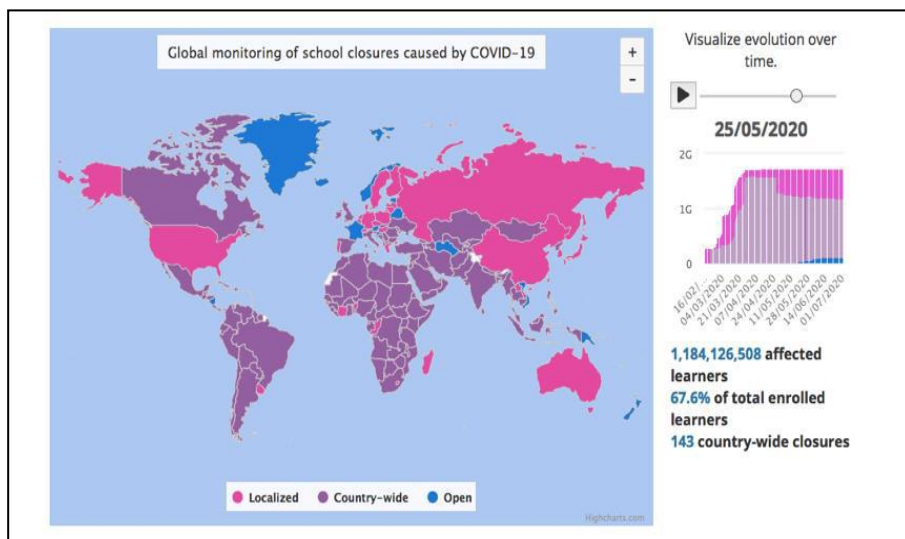
Figure 1: COVID-19 impact on education by UNESCO Institute for statistics data

In an effort to mitigate the impact of school closures, policy makers around the world sought for best possible ways to facilitate the continuity of education through remote learning. The term 'remote learning' is used when the teachers and the students connect and engage with the content from geographically remote locations (Cain, Marrara, Pitre & Armour 2007). In the context of this research, the term 'remote learning' is used to describe students learning from their locations via TV Programmes, mainly in an asynchronous manner. During the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the institutions around the world have been compelled to shift to remote learning. However, the transition to this new normal is dependent on several factors: teachers and learners' preparedness, technology tools and set-up available to teachers and in students' homes (Ray 2020). The preparedness for any remote learning strategy has to be ensured at various stages, namely, at the planning stage, designing stage, implementation stage and evaluation stage. Both the teacher and the learners have to be accustomed to remote learning and the use of technological tools.

An important distinction is useful at this stage: while e-learning allows students to have access to educational curriculum outside the classroom with

the aid of electronic technologies, remote learning happens when the teachers and learners remain connected and engaged while working from home. Many tertiary institutions around the world are focusing on delivering online courses with rich repositories but this is not the case for primary and secondary education. Since the industrial revolution, schooling at primary and secondary levels has always been done within the four walls of the classroom. Learners have been accustomed to learn in this mode for decades, if not centuries. The teacher was seen as the sole source of knowledge and the learners as recipients of knowledge. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced policy makers and tertiary education designers to rethink the way teaching and learning happened. The policy makers, teachers and learners are required to move from their comfort zone to adopt new strategies to ensure continuity of education. Consequently, during the lockdown period, policy makers in Mauritius had recourse to remote learning where TV programmes broadcast lessons from the primary school curriculum. Transitioning to this new mode of learning was a challenge for both policy makers and the Higher Education designers of school curricula in Mauritius. Unlike virtual classrooms, where things are tested prior implementation, remote learning through TV programmes had to be implemented instantaneously without any prior testing. We were not in state of preparedness. We had a rough welcome to a volatile context; indeed, the situation changed suddenly and unexpectedly.

This chapter thus explains and describes our experiences as Higher Education personnel working in the field of teacher education and curriculum development. We were in fact the designers and managers of the video-making process. These videos were developed and customized in line with the primary school curricula in a systematic manner. The designers were put in front of a '*fait accompli'* and had to execute the decision of policy makers in order to address the issue of massive 'de-schooling'.

2 Learning
2.1 Learning through TV Programmes
Learning through TV programmes has always been a feature of documentaries or programmes for children (Rey-López, Fernández-Vilas & Díaz-Redondo 2006). In 1973, Robert Heyman coined the term ***edutainment*** to describe this form of entertainment, which is also educational at the same time (Rey-López, Fernández-Vilas & Díaz-Redondo 2006). The programmes with this content

on TV are often referred to as t-learning; for example, games and interactive stories for children are broadcasted on TV for remote learning. Figure 2 illustrates the processes involved for the t-learning experiences.

Figure 2: Creation of t-learning experiences

Rey-López, Fernández-Vilas and Díaz-Redondo (2006) argue that learners construct knowledge and experiences while watching educational TV programmes through three main stages: selection, adaptation and composition. The students select the information according to their learning interests, adapt the learning according to their needs and beliefs, and finally, compose their own mental representations of their learning. It was found that adding some relevant audiovisual elements to the learning contents help to make the learners' experiences more entertaining. However, it should also be noted that young students, especially at primary level, normally have a passive attitude while watching TV programmes. Indeed, they watch TV with different mind-sets and purposes. In the context of Mauritius, the objectives of broadcasting the educational TV programmes were not for entertainment but rather for continuous learning during the lockdown period. Since schools were closed and students were confined at home, the educational TV programmes were designed to promote self-learning in an environment different from the classroom. The students had to frame their mindsets to attain specific objectives aligned to the curriculum framework.

However, education in 21st century has increasingly gone digital. It focuses on the development of 21st century and ICT skills. Policy makers are emphasizing creative skills that contribute to lifelong learning. The motto is to shape learners to function in this competitive world. It can be argued that we are evolving in an era where there is an increase in demand for critical thinking and creativity, while the daily tasks are taken care of by computers. We can call this era the 'new renaissance era', as there is a need for renaissance workers with problem-solving skills, judgment, creativity, collaboration and empathy, in contrast to just applying facts to algorithmic problems (Ventures 2019). As an example, in Mauritius, massive investment was made in classroom technologies such as tablets and interactive projectors.

2.2 Learning in a Metamodern Era

Learning through TV programmes involves different sets of methods and predispositions from normal schooling. It reflects a state of affairs where the modern and the postmodern coexist within a single sphere of interactions. Two social institutions, the home and the school, have coalesced into one single space. They are normally kept separate and although both are socialization agents, they have different sets of functions. Home and school have merged and have been glued together during the lockdown by TV. This mix of old (home and school) and new 'TV', may be captured through the lens of metamodernism (Udhin 2019).

Metamodernism is characterized by oscillations of society from one set of discourses to another. These sets of discourses are sometimes diametric-cally opposed. For example, it is not uncommon to find oscillations from irony to sincerity (Syundyukov 2017) or conservatism and futurism. Vermeulen and Van den Akker (2010) and Williams (2015) define metamodernism as a new cultural branch and a 'structure of feeling'. In other terms, metamodernism is presented as post-postmodernism. The nature of learning experiences from the metamodernist perspectives is mediated by digital technologies and their social interaction features. For instance, learning in the 21st century is ubiquitous. As a modern institution, school must share the brain space of learners with platforms such as YouTube. We as Higher Education designers of curriculum embrace the dual nature of the 21st century learner. The learner is both active on social media and at times a passive consumer of artefacts on the same platforms. This phenomenon has been explained as digimodernism (Luebeck

2015). In the same vein, as designers of curriculum, we have been socialized into theories and approaches to learning. This corpus of knowledge influences our professional practice to some extent. For instance, some tend to believe that technology does not influence the way learners learn.

This multiplicity of frames of reference and oscillations make our practice highly volatile and complex. There is a fleeting impression that, since opposing views and feelings are admitted, anything and everything goes, and everyone could have an equally valid opinion on anything. The VUCA concept explains situations characterized by the above.

VUCA is an acronym for 'volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous'. The term is often used to characterize the 21st century. The term was first used by the US Army to explain the work during the Cold War period (Kinsinger & Walch 2012). As we unpack the four aspects of VUCA, we can relate the concepts to the current world. Volatility denotes dynamic, rapid and powerful changes in the environment that results in unexpected and unprecedented challenges. For instance, COVID-19 was unexpected. Currently, we do not even know when the pandemic will end. It is also not possible for us to predict how COVID-19 will evolve. This definitely relates to uncertainty. COVID-19 is assuredly a complex phenomenon. It is multi-dimensional and can be fully understood only through a multipronged approach. There is no precedent for COVID-19 and it is a phenomenon that brings opportunities along with threats to human societies. Many other 21st century phenomena are equally VUCA: other examples could be climate change or geo-political issues. Therefore, it is ambiguous.

Dimensions of VUCA also resonate with the metamodernist explanation of the world. Indeed, ambiguity could mean that societies, organizations and individuals experience swings between contrasting feelings such as hope and despair or threats and opportunities. From the metamodern perspective, it needs to be highlighted that the situation is quite uncertain since the way societies will react to events cannot be anticipated. The speed of changes and oscillations in the metamodern world could also mean that human societies and discourses are highly volatile. It took only a declaration from Donald Trump for the US to walk out of the Paris Agreement on climate change mitigation. Many North African countries were swept by a social movement called the Arab Spring (Salam 2015). The movement evaporated as suddenly as it had appeared. These examples clearly elaborate the VUCA nature of our world.

3 A *Bricolage* of Methodologies

This chapter exploits the *Bricolage* method. It is important for the reader to understand what is implied by this method of inquiry and how useful it is in the context of research during the COVID-19 pandemic. The conceptualisation of b*ricolage* research is generally accredited to Denzin and Lincoln (2000).

Firstly, b*ricolage* involves critical, multi-perspective (sometimes competing), multi-theoretical, multi-methodological approaches to inquiry. It is increasingly popular in the social sciences (Rogers 2012), but it remains an underutilized and misunderstood methodology for qualitative inquiry (O'Regan 2015). One of the main misconceptions is that *bricolage* is a mere patchwork of methodologies.

Secondly, *bricolage* is messy, complex and not straightforward, as compared to traditional methodologies. It revolves much around how researchers artfully combine multiple disciplines, methodologies and varying theoretical lenses. The multiplicity of methodologies, instruments and disciplines often yield a vibrant dialogue of diverse types of texts. This offers a fertile terrain for self-critique which is not possible in one-sided texts. For instance, data from designers of videos, viewers and teachers produce different texts. Designers contribute personal accounts of processes and tools while engaging viewers. This would generate netnographic data. The interaction of such varied scripts or weaving of stories as Weinstein & Weinstein (1991), put it, offers wide-ranging possibilities to explore social phenomena.

Moreover, *bricolage* is quite useful when dealing with contexts and events that are irregular and ambiguous (O'Regan 2015). We can relate 'volatile' to the previous sentence and it would aptly reflect the context of this study. A multi-methodological and multi-perspective approach could help to explore how the phenomena under the research lens are lived, practised, enacted, sustained and so on (Law 2014). For instance, in the case of this study, as researchers and participants, we can contribute to how we implemented the process of video making during the confinement period, with no physical contact with collaborators and denied of the capabilities of a workspace. Other participants told us how they experienced the videos as different audiences, with students going through the novel experience of learning from home and parents having to add another dimension to their parenting roles.

To write this chapter, we have tried to work with two avatars of b*ricolage,* namely, the methodological *bricoleur* and the interpretive *bricoleur*

(Kincheloe 2001). The methodological *bricoleur* is a researcher who puts together multiple research instruments to achieve meaning making. The experiences of Wickens (2011) in this regard are evocative. Indeed, the combination of methods yielded a rich, deep and fluid data. Furthermore, the availability of a multi-methodological framework allowed Wickens (2011) to make use of the contextual exigencies to guide data production. In the case of this study, the context of total lock-down and the mushrooming of social media instances to support education, led us as researchers to produce data from social media. We had created a Facebook page to support students and parents during the pandemic. The interpretive *bricoleur* incarnation has more to do with the interpretation of the findings. The findings enabled us to explore the myriad of epistemological and political dimension of the emergency educational set-up. Indeed, an event can be reported from different perspectives if not from a single perspective. Furthermore, such an approach also ensures that the researchers give due consideration to the complexity of meaning making (Denzin & Lincoln 1999).

3.1 Autoethnographic Vignettes

The Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) was called upon to set-up, manage and design educational videos for primary and secondary education. We have been deeply involved in the implementation of the main strategy of the policy makers to sustain education during the confinement period. We used an autoethnographic method, namely vignettes, to tell our lived experienced of working-from-home during the pandemic. Autoethnography is a qualitative research methodology that connects ethnography, biography and self-analysis (Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chung 2010). The three interconnected aspects of this methodology are the *auto* (the biographical), the *ethno* (the cultural) and the *graphy* (the methodological) (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 1996; Chang 2007). Autoethnography can be conceptualized as the telling of an experience accompanied by critical reflection.

Vignettes have been used as an autoethnographic method to bring forward personal stories and emotional aspects to describe a lived experience (Pitard 2016). As vignettes deal with lived experiences, they inscribe themselves in an autoethnographic phenomenological framework. The experiences of the individual are the focal point of any cultural interaction. Through the vignettes, we explored the impact of the work-from-home mode

and the demand of the policy maker to sustain education through educational videos to be broadcasted on TV. The vignettes relate our personal experiences to the wider social context of the pandemic. We disclosed our innermost feelings during this very stressful period. The vignettes also include how we negotiated through several layers of staff and personnel of other organizations.

The vignettes can be textual or pictorial (Hill 1997). They have been written as brief accounts of our lived experiences. Vignettes are designed to facilitate the study of attitudes, perceptions and beliefs over a wide range of social issues (Barter & Renold 2000). The vignettes in this paper also have the same aim. Vignettes are useful for providing authentic insights into the researchers' lives. In this way, the readers of an autoethnographic paper can have, to some extent, an experience of the researchers' field (Jarzabkowski, Bednarek & Lê 2014). It was an experience we felt was worth telling through vignettes: never in living memory had the world witnessed such an event impacting on all spheres of life and human activity.

3.2 Netnography

The Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) created a Facebook page in March 2020 to support parents, teachers and students during the confinement period. This page was meant for posting worksheets, links to educational sites and repositories, demos, articles and learning strategies amongst others. The page has, to date, over twenty thousand members, mostly from Mauritius. The page quickly gelled into a vibrant community of sharers, likers and commenters. The Facebook page was also a space for different stakeholders to comment on the educational Television (TV) programme that we designed.

We had recourse to netnography as a methodology to produce data from the Facebook page. Netnography is used in social media research. Netnography was conceptualised by Kozinets (2019). Netnography is used to explore virtual communities and in particular the cultural experiences that can be studied from traces, practices, networks and systems of social media platforms. For instance, on the Facebook page, we were particularly interested in the 'likes', 'comments' and 'shares' made by the community members. These features gave us insight into how well our work was being received by the general public, including parents, and other stakeholders.

Netnography is evidently constructed from ethnography. This method-ology shares a lot in common with ethnography. For instance, both method-

ologies are concerned with human experience and cultural understanding. Just like ethnography, netnography also focuses on human context and social systems of share meaning. To achieve its purpose, netnographers have to undergo a three-step process: immersion, interaction and investigation. As the creators and the moderators of the page, we were fully immersed in the immediate experiences and activities of the page members. Our immersion was *de facto*. As moderators, we often had to interact with users, dealing with sensitive issues. Our interaction was also in terms of posting regular page-level announcements that were visible by all members. Netnography has enabled us to become more aware of other views of the world (different ontologies). This experience connected to our personal experiences on the design of educational videos, resulted into a powerful brew for us, with the possibly long-lasting effects.

3.3 Interviews with Parents and Learners via Zoom

The recent developments in communication technologies have impacted greatly on social research methods (Kenny 2005). One such advance, Zoom, has been quite useful to us while carrying out this research. Zoom is a cloud-based, videoconferencing system with many other features such as file sharing, screen sharing, webinars, group meetings and so on (Zoom Video Communications Inc. 2016). It allows for real-time communication over distance and can be deployed on a multiplicity of devices (laptops, mobile phones, and tablets). Zoom video conferencing has been used for qualitative data collection (Archibald, Ambagtsheer, Casey & Lawless 2019). The pros and cons of using Zoom as a tool for data production has not been fully investigated (Weller 2015). For instance, there is little conclusive evidence that using Zoom improves participants' experience.

However, the confinement period during the COVID-19 pandemic left us with very little to choose from in terms of tools for research, especially to carry out interviews. Improved connectivity in the Mauritian context, better hardware capabilities and convenience of using Zoom underpinned our decision to remotely interview students. It was out of the question to move to the respondents' places (parent and students', in this case) due to the strict sanitary measures that prevailed. So, we had recourse to parents whom we knew had kids studying at primary school level and would possibly watch the

educational TV programmes. As a matter of fact, we interviewed both parents and kids on Zoom, with the parents speaking to us after the kids had left.

Beyond the technological convenience that Zoom provided us, we were able to build excellent rapport with the interviewees. There are many reasons to this. During the confinement, almost everyone had started using some form of videoconferencing application to stay in touch with relatives or to work from home. Therefore, the participants were quite at ease during the interview. Also, both researchers and participants were able to see and hear each other, almost like in a face-to-face conversation. Viewing each other facilitated the conversation; non-verbal cues were available for both researcher and participants. These resonate with research done by Deakin & Wakefield (2014) on the use of Skype for social research. They also confirmed that it was not difficult to established rapport via the videoconferencing tool.

4 The (Re)Design Process
4.1 *Autoethnographic Vignette 1*

O pandemic, you had struck the world forcing us off our routine. We had to turn off everything. No work. No school.
But that, you did not know; we have immense resources. We could go underground, but we would be still alive and kicking.
No work, no problem; we would work from home. No school, no problem; we would learn from home.
There would not be any disengagement from schooling. If learners could not come to school, school would reach out to them via their TV screens. If teachers and students could not have in-person interactions, they would be connected via the TV screens. COVID-19, we would retreat, but we would not surrender!
O COVID-19, after we would have defeated you by shutting ourselves down temporarily, we would rise up without any lost. Our children would have lost nothing to you because we had the Educational TV channel.

> Yes, we had immense resources: skilled teachers, who would make videos for students over all grades and subjects. We had planned everything. The whole process was set-up very fast. We knew it had to be TV; we would reach everyone. We knew how to design for TV; everyone loves watching TV. We knew what the students needed. They needed to keep in touch with their schools, with their routines and their copybooks. Above all, we had the capabilities to provide for everyone, every grade, every subject.
>
> COVID-19, we are only human.

4.2 Autoethnographic Vignette 2

> We are tired. We cannot go on like this. It's been many weeks now. We cannot make so many videos on a daily basis…You don't understand. We cannot produce videos in a factory-like settings. It is impossible…We are asking too much to all the parties involved, especially the teachers and those who are ensuring the design aspects are appropriate for the viewers.
>
> I hope you know…that the visuals should be properly designed…so that the viewers have an optimal learning experience. Right?
>
> Oh, [this means] aspects like contrast, size of fonts and choice of pictures, for example. You get it?
>
> It's part of the message design. We cannot dissociate this from the whole design process…Yeah, the content is what is important. I agree. But what if good content is poorly conveyed?
>
> Oh, and we need to have some content vetting as well. Yeah, we badly need that. You've seen the feedback in the press, I hope.
>
> No, I'm not slowing down the process. I'm all for it but…

You got to listen to me…I mean…It's not fair to us and the viewers. We need to craft a good message for them out there.
Hello? You still on the call? You got to tell them. We can do better.
Can we just pause for a few days? I can get things right with the team if we pause.
What?
Oh.
They wouldn't agree to a pause? You are sure?
I just don't get it. We want to make things well. We can do it, but this way? We need some breathing space.
Come on! We don't even know how these poor kids are taking it. Give us a chance to design from their perspective.
Hello? You there? Hello?
<your connection is slow>

4.3 Our Lived Experiences

It was a very weird feeling to work-from-home during the pandemic. The team of curriculum designers, who usually work for designing or re-designing print-based curricular materials for digital platforms, held a set of beliefs regarding learners' learning. These beliefs were confronted to the new context: total confinement of the population, closure of schools and workplaces. We tended to believe that we knew the 21st century learner and we relied a lot on constructs such as digimodernism (Luebeck 2015). Our first reactions, when asked by the policy makers to contribute to sustain education, was to go for solutions that would be in line with our beliefs: the learner was more suited to digital solutions. The 21st century learners would thrive in a situation where they could have a choice of what to learn, when to learn and possibly how to learn.

However, our beliefs were not shared by the policy makers. They opted for a much 'older' solution: the television. With hindsight, they could have been right. The internet penetration in Mauritius is roughly 70%, while above 96% of households own a television. In terms of accessibility, this was the right thing to do. However, it was difficult for us, as a team, not to oscillate between our views of the 21st century learners and the plain assessment of the policy

makers that a means to reach the maximum number of learners should be chosen.

The choice of software to make the videos was PowerPoint. This is where the oscillations mentioned above became severely stressful for us as we were part of the design process. It was assumed, as mentioned in the vignettes, that as designers, we had the expertise to design for TV. The fact that a tablet screen is much smaller than a TV screen and requires an altogether different set of design principles, was brushed aside. It was painful to us that we were not being listened to. Another bone of contention between us and the policy makers was the fact that the school routine was being copied and pasted onto the home environment. There was no real consideration of whether this was a viable possibility. We just had to do it. We had to deliver.

The other key actors in the process of video making, the teachers, were also chosen on a voluntary basis, and were assigned a daunting task: make the videos from home and send to our team. The process was long and complex. It is described in the infographic (Figure 3) below:
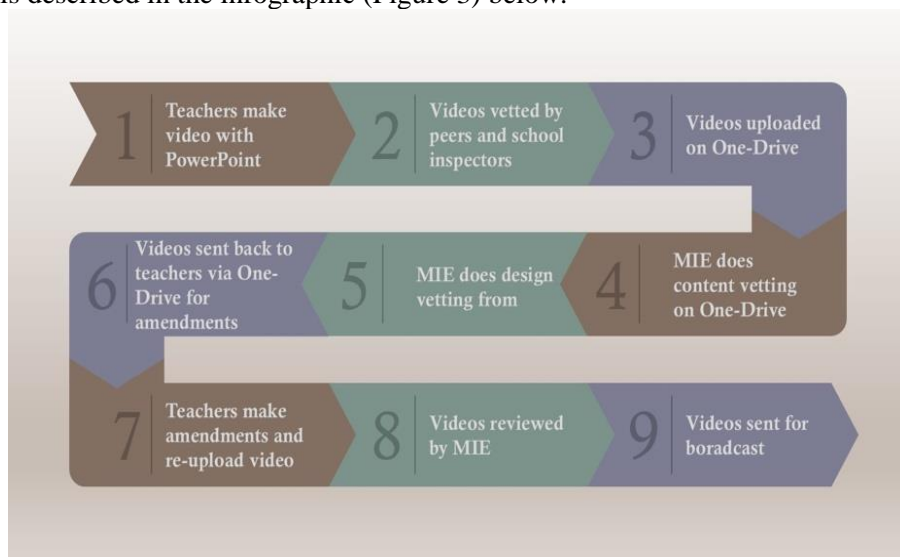
Figure 3: The video making process

The video making process had nine different steps (Figure 3). It should be noted that the participants were not in physical contact. Everything was

being done on a cloud-based platform, which is ironic. This resonates with Syundyukov (2017), as it was deemed that the Internet was not the appropriate solution for our learners. The process flow chart resembles a snake: we could say that it was really like snakes and ladders, with the snakes appearing randomly at any level and causing us unanticipated difficulties. We managed to produce thousands of videos, but at what cost? The process was rife with tension among partners. We tried to apply our professional standards as designers (or re-designers) of curriculum. However, this was perceived by teachers and policy makers as a time-wasting device. We did make thousands of videos, but what did we actually produce? Yes, learners were not given the opportunity to forget school during confinement, but did they learn? We could not measure if there was real engagement or disengagement.

The second vignette is more poignant, in the sense that it is a phone conversation one of the authors had with a high-level official. It is written as a monologue as the author felt that it was a cry in wilderness. We did not feel that we were heard. Managing the work of the educators, mediating the vetting process with subject matter experts and trying to respond to the demands of the policy makers to develop a given number of videos per day, took its toll on the team of designers of curriculum. We tried to crawl back to our comfort zone where we could engage with a learner profile and solutions that would tie up to it by asking for a pause, but to no avail. In this sense, the vignettes give an account of our lived experience resonating with the uses of autoethnographic vignettes identified by Pitard (2016).

The netnographic data shows that an expectation was created within the population. They shared the belief of the policy makers that the TV programmes would not cause learners to disengage from school. Figure 4 is a post by a member of our Facebook page asking for the TV programme schedule. Figures 4 and 5 below illustrate a parent asking for the timetable so that he/ she could plan with the children prior to the programme on TV.
Alhough the programmes were very much in demand, this did not mean that they were to the satisfaction of the consumers. For instance, parents were requesting programmes in the mother-tongue of the learner, as illustrated in Figure 6. They also had issues with the number of programmes, and the repetition of videos was not welcomed by parents, as illustrated in Figure 7. They wanted programmes over a variety of subjects and grades. This was not really possible to produce, given the complex production chain that we had and the tensions among the stakeholders.
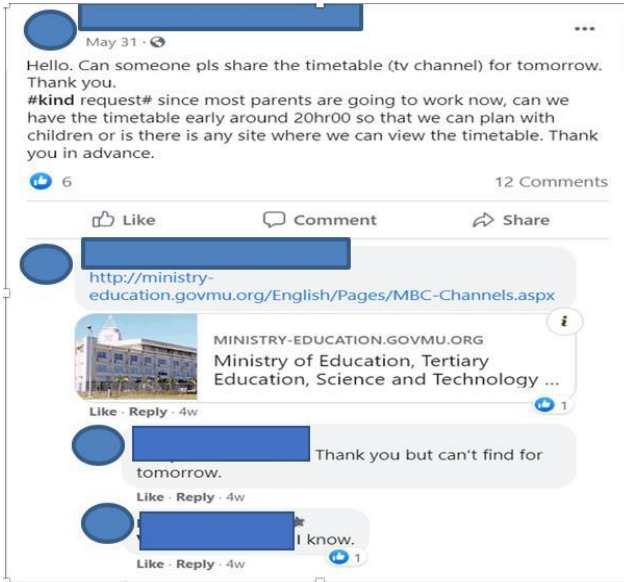
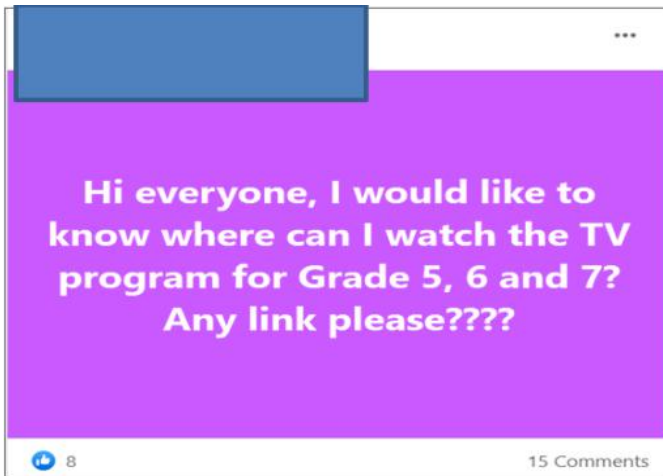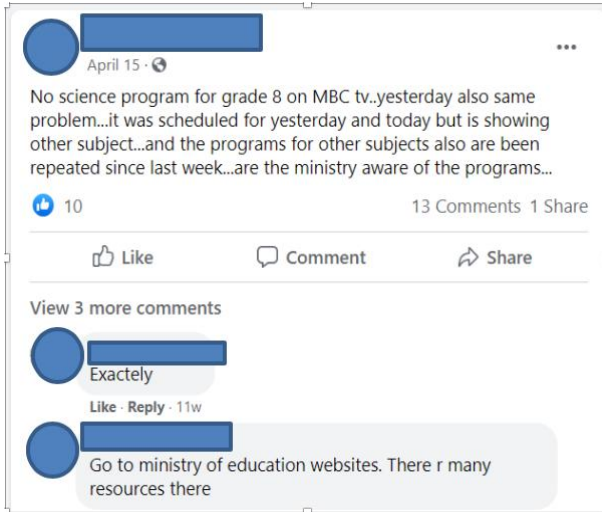**Figure 4: Request for TV programme 1**


Figure 5: Request for TV programme 2

Furthermore, teachers who were producing videos were not in great in number. Many of them discontinued their collaboration with us. They were being discouraged by two factors. Firstly, our design requirements such as using the proper fonts, colours, pace of lessons, quality of audio, tone of voice and above all no use of copyrighted assets such as pictures and YouTube content, was off-putting, and a challenge. Secondly, there was a chasm between subject matter experts from the MIE and teachers, regarding what was the correct version of content. Teachers were also discouraged by the fact the public focussed on mistakes made while producing the videos rather that the efforts made by teachers (Figure 8). However, there were also many 'likes' (to use Facebook jargon) regarding the programme. Some of the page members showed their appreciation, as illustrated in Figure 9.

Figure 6: Request for programmes in mother-tongue

Figure 7: Request for programmes on Science
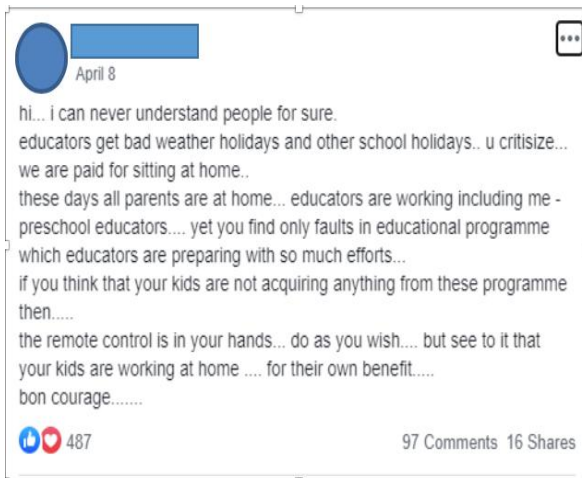
Figure 8: Teacher complaining about lack of understanding from the public

Figure 9: Appreciation expressed by parent for TV programmes

Based on an interview with parents and learners on Zoom, it was revealed that a key aspect in the design of a television programme is the pace of the videos within the programme. Programme pace is defined as the amount of information presented per unit time while cognitive pace referred to the amount of information processed per unit of time (Wright *et al.* 1984). Comprehension and learning depend on whether the cognitive pace of the student can keep up with the programme pace. The pace of a programme presentation on television is usually not sensitive to the cognitive pace of the viewer; it progresses whether comprehension has been achieved or not. Viewers who are familiar with the information presented are able to keep up with the programme pace, even if it is fast. Moreover, if some information is missed, knowledge about a similar domain may be helpful to fill in missing information from long-term memory. By contrast, if the learner has little background knowledge, his or her cognitive pace will be slower, perhaps dropping below the pace at which information is presented. Since there is also

less information in long-term memory that would be useful to fill in missing information, this situation could rapidly lead to comprehension failure.

According to parents and learners interviewed on Zoom, there needs to be a fair balance in terms of the pace of the programme as the learner remains passive with no interactions with the content. A pace needs to be selected that is slow enough so that the students can understand the concepts, and at the same time, fast enough so that it will hold the audience's attention. In order to accommodate a large number of viewers, it may be most useful to select an intermediate pace, and make special provisions for slower learners to review the materials (e.g., downloading options and reviewing the programme at home; engage slower learners in special review activities in more structured classroom settings). In addition, programmes should include straightforward segments following complex ones, to allow students to assimilate and make sense of the information presented before extra information is added. Explanatory examples can give viewers time to make inferences and elaborate on the information presented to deepen learning.

The findings also reveal that the selection and organization of the content present challenging design issues for educational television programming. Materials that relate to viewers' personal experience and deal with the human and social aspects of real life, are remembered best. Programmes that embed contexts that are familiar to the students may therefore be most effective to hold their attention. Parents advanced that the organization of information can have a significant impact on how well it is understood and memorised. They also pointed out that useful strategies to help students recognize the main point of a broadcast lesson include its repeated exemplification and highlighting in the commentary.

Lesson designers play a pivotal role in facilitating the use of educational television programmes and learning, and use tools such as: enhancing student learning by articulating learning goals; fostering learners' self-confidence and pride by having a friendly attitude; creating connections between the broadcasted programme and students' lives; establishing, sustaining, and reinforcing pupils' interest in the programme, and modelling the use of the programme. The interviews also reveal that high-continuity programmes (programmes for which the lessons follow the syllabus or textbook in an ordered way) lead to better recall and understanding compared to low-continuity programmes, in which lessons are independent and unconnected.

However, the transience of information broadcast on television presents a set of issues. Learners sometimes have difficulties integrating separate content sequences into an organized whole. Although these students may understand the content sequence by sequence, they have difficulties integrating them to derive main points. Moreover, it was noted that lessons on television where the presenter becomes an actor are more effective than a segment with the same content in which the same presenter is only a narrator. Nevertheless, characteristics of presenters that can enhance students' learning outcomes and attitudes are an upbeat, self-assured and enthusiastic portrayal; being intrinsically interested in the subject matter and being eager to share knowledge with others.

5   Conclusion

We managed to get through the confinement period and Mauritius is currently no longer under sanitary confinement. However, we can say that we have emerged from this unprecedented situation bruised. Our beliefs and practices have been severely tested. We have both succeeded (in making a number of videos) and failed (in not considering alternative solutions). Therefore, we oscillate between two diametrically opposed sentiments, success and failure. This is true for metamodernist contexts. We are living in what is now called the 'new normal' (Cahapay 2020), and we are acutely aware that we are living in VUCA times. We believe that our experience in trying to maintain schooling and to prevent learner disengagement has been a steep learning curve for us as designers of curriculum. We were so certain that the world only moves forward (with digitization and more use of digital artefacts in education), that we would never have considered going back to old methodologies and technologies. This was quite hurtful and challenging as we were confronted with a political imperative to maintain the system and we were seen as those who were not cooperating. Perhaps we should now be considering how curricula and teacher education should be re-engineered to suit VUCA times. However, this is easier said than done. It needs empowerment and concerted actions at several levels. It is important to note that teachers did not have the necessary training nor the proper logistics to make good videos.

To end, our prime concern remains the learner. In brief, many aspects of the design of educational television programmes for broadcast influenced learners' understanding of the information presented, including the pace and

continuity of a programme, the attitude of the presenter, and the content. Whether or not learners will be suited to the variety and pace of the information presented, is dependent on such factors as their age, their expectations of the television medium, and their knowledge background.

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