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A PEDAGOGICAL SHIFTS IN THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION: RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IN THREE AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

The outbreak of the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has resulted in a pedagogical shift whereby most of the universities globally are opting for online teaching as opposed to face-to-face teaching. The three understudied universities have migrated from face-to-face to online teaching. The purpose of this study is to assess quality enhancement measures put in place by the understudied universities on online platforms created. Kolb's learning theory was used as a theoretical framework. The study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The interpretive paradigm was followed to interpret the quality enhancement measures of online teaching in three African universities. Data were collected through documents analysis of three universities understudied. Policies, memorandums, letters, and all communication media of Online Distance Learning (ODL) for three universities were also interrogated to determine the extent of quality that has been put in place for online teaching. The results of the study revealed that all the three universities effectively prepared the online platforms which included training of lecturers. However, on the site of students' preparedness, all the universities were found not ready to deal with students' challenges that emerged due to abrupt migration to online teaching. The results also revealed that all the universities understudied did not put in place any quality enhancement measures as part of the transition from face-to-face to online teaching. The study concluded that the universities understudied were rapidly transitioning to online teaching and learning in response to COVID-19 without considering quality issues and also other challenges that strongly emerged on the site of students. The study recommends that the universities revisit the transition plan to deal with student's challenges and also accommodate quality issues in the process.

Keywords

COVID-19, institutions of higher education, Kolb's learning theory, online learning, quality enhancement

Introduction

Background and introduction of the study

For the time immemorial, much investment in higher education has been devoted to physical and human resources that support the conventional face-to-face mode of learning. However, more than ever before, higher education institutions of the 21st century are confronted with a challenge to introduce modes of delivery that enable them to stay relevant in an education world that continues to move online. This is due to the recognition that, to evolve with the next generation of students and ensure their graduates will possess employability attributes required for the 4th Industry Revolution and beyond, higher education institutions need to change the way they approach education (Castro, 2019). Zimmerman (2019) points out that to appeal to the new millennium students (famously known as Generation Z) and employers, higher education institutions need to adopt new ways to deliver academic materials, focusing on customizable courses and experiences outside of the classroom. This is because the current generation of students has become accustomed to

customisable consumption, including education. In light of this development, the higher education landscape has been ever-evolving to meet the needs of the current wide range of student body, from re-shaping curriculum to re-designing course delivery methods through modalities such as blended and online distance learning methods.

The global higher education landscape has dramatically changed in the past few months due to the unprecedented spread of the infectious disease known as coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19). Universities across the globe have been forced to close campuses and switch to online teaching and digital tools in the wake of the coronavirus. The study of Anderson and Nielsen (2019) revealed that many universities across the globe have been claiming to integrate technology in their daily teaching without the actual practices. Therefore, the outbreak of COVID-19 has exposed most of the universities that they are not ready for online teaching. The study by Murphy and Wyness (2020) revealed that most universities can set their online platforms and train the academic staff for online teaching and readiness. However, most of the challenges emerge on the site of students due to their different geographical contexts and also the different socio-economic status of students. According to World Health Organisation (2020a), a large number of students across the higher education sector have been dramatically impacted by the spread of the coronavirus, from travel restrictions to social distancing, isolation measures, quarantines, campus closures, and border closures.

Most universities boast their academic relevancy and nationalisation by the number of international students that they have. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 international students has been directly affected due to travel restrictions, flight cancellations, difficulties with obtaining scholarship interviews, visa applications, or language tests; exam cancellations or postponements; and health concerns (World Health Organisation, 2020b). This study was conducted in three African universities (2 South African universities and 1 Namibian university). For many universities in Africa, international students bring much-needed revenue each year. With travel restrictions and closed borders, universities are coming to terms with the fact that this revenue may be significantly reduced in the next academic year. Unsurprisingly, digital and online methods are becoming more vital as the coronavirus forces students and institutions to meet and communicate through digital means (Murphy & Wyness, 2020). However, the question remains whether these three African universities are ready for online teaching. There have been some attempts by the three understudied universities to migrate from face-to-face to online teaching. This study interrogated quality enhancement measures put on online platforms in the three universities understudied.

Quality assurance in higher education

All over the world, quality assurance has become an integral part of higher education systems. This is due to the recognition that for higher education to take its rightful position of playing a significant role in the production of skilled human resource capacity needed for economic growth, education provision must be of higher quality (Castells, 2009). To this effect, any effort that goes into university teaching should be geared towards enhancing the quality of the student learning experience. Against this background, quality assurance has become a central theme in higher education whereby initiatives for assuring quality have been introduced at both national and institutional levels (Haris, 2013). Vlăsceanu, Grünberg and Pârlea (2007: 20) define quality assurance as an “all-embracing term referring to an on-going, continuous process of evaluating (assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining, and improving) the quality of a higher education system, institutions, or programmes”. The definition is in line with Luckett (2006) who defines quality assurance as the systematic internal and external management procedures and mechanisms by which an institution of higher education assures its stakeholders of quality and its ability to manage the maintenance and enhancement of quality.

The higher education quality assurance systems are characterized by internal and external quality assurance. Internal quality assurance encompasses all the activities that higher education institutions must carry out internally to maintain and improve their quality. In other words, internal quality

assurance refers to the internal institutional policies and mechanisms of a higher education institution for ensuring that it is fulfilling its purposes as well as meeting the standards that apply to higher education in general or to the profession or discipline (Luckett, 2010). Some of the internal quality assurance mechanisms are such as external moderation and -examination systems, self-assessment (usually followed by external peer assessment for validation), benchmarking and stakeholder feedback (Harvey & Williams, 2010). External quality assurance, on the other hand, refers to a range of quality monitoring and procedures that are undertaken by bodies outside of a higher education institution (professional bodies or quality assurance agencies) in order to determine whether the institution meets agreed upon or predetermined quality standards. External quality assurance involves mechanisms such as registration of higher education institutions, accreditation by professional bodies or quality assurance agencies, and institutional audits. Normally the system of external quality assurance has two main purposes, namely quality enhancement/improvement and external accountability (Williams, 2016).

In recent years, there has been a paradigm shift in higher education from teaching to learning (Haris, 2013). Traditional understanding was on knowledge transfer based on teacher-centered approaches, while contemporary understanding is based on knowledge construction through student-centered approaches. This shift comes in the wake of new challenges confronting higher education including, but not limited to massification, internalisation, knowledge economy, and information communication technology (ICT) (Badat, 2010). Of late, the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4^{th} IR) has taken its toll, and in the developed world people are already talking about the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5th IR). All these new waves in the higher education space call for curriculum design and development, learning and teaching, and assessment practices to be responsive enough, if higher education is to remain relevant in today's digital era. The current student generation (Generation Z) also poses new challenges in terms of how the lecturers must interact with students. Traditional lecture approaches where the lecturer was known to be the only source of knowledge are now being confronted by new ways of learning, as informed by social and psychological theories of learning, where the student is an equal player in knowledge construction.

It is indubitable that quality teaching has become an issue of importance as the landscape of higher education has been facing continuous changes due to factors such as increased international competition, increasing social and geographical diversity of the student body, increasing demands of value for money, the introduction of information technologies, etc. The student body has considerably expanded and diversified, both socially and geographically. New students call for new teaching methods. Modern technologies have entered the classroom, thus modifying the nature of the interactions between students and professors (Henard & Leprince-Ringuet, 2008). The recent challenge confronting the higher education landscape all over the world is the drastic shift towards online learning as a mitigating measure to the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic whereby contact learning and teaching have become impossible. This abrupt shift to online learning has put institutions of higher learning under pressure as the existing online platforms were not designed to accommodate huge numbers of students in terms of capacity and expertise.

A key question is whether the same shift in the mode of delivery is reflected in the practice of quality assurance processes. Currently, there is an ongoing debate about how quality assurance could continuously improve the quality of student learning experiences and outcomes as the core function of higher education. The current quality assurance practices, whether external or internal, have been criticised for focusing on processes and not on student learning, but if effectively revisited, can have a transformational impact (Luckett, 2010). In the face of unprecedented levels of disruption from the global disaster of COVID-19 that require adherence to social distancing protocols, most higher education institutions all over the world have been doing all they could to use technology to replace face-to-face with online teaching. This drastic shift has led higher

education pundits and commentators as practitioners to become increasingly concerned to identify appropriate ways of assuring the quality of this e-learning provision. This is because the abrupt shift to online learning has affected the existing quality assurance, and as a consequence, they may not able to adequately support quality enhancement in an online student learning experience. Set against this context, using Kolb's learning theory becomes relevant for this study as the theory project different learning styles of students and how quality may be compromised in transition from face to face to online. This transformation includes the whole range of ensuring the quality of online academic processes such as curriculum development, learning and teaching, and assessment. The three universities understudied have experienced several challenges that came as a result of COVID-19 which are discussed below.

COVID-19 and challenges experienced by the universities

The three understudied universities experienced some challenges to navigate this crisis (COVID-19) while maintaining consistent course delivery, ensuring strong student recruitment numbers, and providing clear communication to staff and students. In the face of these challenges, universities have implemented a range of measures to adapt to this new normal which are as follows:

- Switched some of their scheduled courses online;
- Delayed the start dates for some of their courses until the following semester;
- Changed their application deadlines for their next intake;
- Deferred some of their 2020 offers and activities to 2021;
- Shifted examination to later in the year (2020);
- Shifted from normal graduation to online graduation, some shifted graduation until further notice.
- Suspended both national and international conferences for staff and students.

Reflecting on all these changes above, this calls for a paradigm shift in higher education. In other words, the practices in universities can no longer be business as usual. The study of Illanes and Serakatsannis (2020) argues that universities will take time to get used to practices and changes in the higher education that are commanded by this unprecedented disease (COVID-19). Archer (1995) argues in the Social Realist theory that any drastic changes in higher education require changes in the structure, culture, and agency of university community. In the context of this study, migrating from face-to-face teaching to online have some structural implication and if not carefully catered for, such transition may compromise quality issues. Hence, this study interrogated all the online platforms for the three universities understudy to assure quality in all university practices. The transition from face-to-face to online also depends on institutional culture and the agency of both students and academic staff to make online teaching a reality. The study of Piopiunik, Schewredt, Simon, and Woessman (2020) argues that students and lecturers play a significant role in the success of any changes that universities are bringing forward. The outbreak of COVID-19 has forced universities understudy to cease student and staff mobility.

COVID-19 and its impact on student and staff mobility

The issue of the internationalisation of curriculum is now at the center stage in the institutions of higher learning. This calls for exchanged programmes, conference attendance, collaborations, and academic visits. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, due to the suspension of traveling in the two countries under study, it becomes difficult to fulfill this academic component. According to Murphy and Wyness (2020), the outbreak of COVID-19 has brought most of the countries and universities to a standstill, including the three understudied universities in South Africa and Namibia. The mobility of students and staff have been impacted by the spread of the coronavirus. International offices across the world are rapidly shifting operations as they adapt to a very different higher education landscape.

In the three universities understudied, academic staff and students have opted to utilise online platforms such as online conferences and other

digital tools that allow the engagements and collaborations to continue. It is against this background that the current study was conducted to look to quality enhancement measures when utilising such digital platforms. The study of Lavy (2015) argues that if the use of digital platforms is not correctly managed, it may affect the quality of teaching and learning. While these are uncertain times, universities can continuously strive to deliver high-quality teaching and consistent communication to students (Illanes & Serakatsannis, 2020). To do so, it's imperative that institutions listen to students' needs and concerns and leverage the latest technological tools, and at the same time making sure that the quality of teaching and learning is not compromised in this process.

The impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, teaching and learning in most universities were severely affected since the universities were forced to find alternative teaching modes to replace face to face. This was to comply with the lockdown rules of social and physical distancing. Due to insufficient training offered to lecturers and students, some are still experiencing some challenges, and this compromises the quality of teaching and learning. Jaschik and Lederman (2014) lamented that institutions of higher learning have to rapidly come up with alternative strategies that could be employed for teaching and learning to commence. Institutions had to come up with tactics and recommendations for possibilities and start developing high-quality learning, student-centered online programs that could be accessed by students from the different socio-economic backgrounds (Murphy & Wyness, 2020). Moreover, Anderson and Nielsen (2019) show that different universities came up with different approached to address teaching and learning.

Most universities have trained students and lecturers on how to rapidly move from face-to-face to online teaching and learning. Badia, Garcia, and Meneses (2017) show that most students and lecturers in remote or rural areas could be mostly be affected. Badia, Garcia, and Meneses (2017) further indicated that in most Namibian and South African remote areas there is no network, no electricity, and most students come from the impoverished socioeconomic back group, so they cannot afford internet devices or data to access online learning platforms. In support of Badia, Garcia, and Meneses (2017); Murphy and Wyness (2020) pointed out that many students could only concentrate on their academic work better when they are at the university than when they are in their disadvantaged homes. A similar view was advanced by Ashe, Singh, and Clark (2013); Abdous (2016); Ko and Rossen (2017) that most universities are issuing out laptops and free Wi-Fi that students and lecturers can use to do their academic activities. Contrary Ashe, Singh and Clark (2013); Abdous (2016); Ko and Rossen (2017); Jaschik and Lederman (2014) strongly emphasised that based on different circumstances from different families it will be difficult for teaching and learning to take place from home. Domestic violence from both Namibia and South Africa is very high. This shows that university students come from different backgrounds that should not be overseen when planning to migrate from face-to-face to online teaching. It is for this reason that the present study investigated the transition from face-to-face to online teaching and the quality enhancement measures put in place during this process.

The transition from face-to-face to online teaching

The rapid shift from face-to-face to online teaching has resulted in several challenges. According to Mayordomo, and Onrubia (2015), roughly 20 percent of students have trouble with basic technology needs. Students with technology challenges are disproportionately low-income and more vulnerable students are likely to dropping out. A report from one of the South African University student organisations pointed that: migration to online teaching and learning is beneficial to certain class privileges and disadvantaging others. Mayordomo and Onrubia (2015) show that it will be difficult for students without gadgets or learning devices to access online material. Roby, Ashe, Singh, and Clark (2013) emphasised that the rapid migration does not have an impact on the university only, but it is also a challenge to students with the socio-economic background. Students come from

disadvantaged communities and homes where they do not enjoy the comfort and leisure to fully focus on their academics.

Thus Bhat, Singh, Naik, Kamath, Mulimani, and Kulkarni (2020) suggested that students should be allowed to return to residents to make use of university resources and the comfort of learning. Bhat, Singh, Naik, Kamath, Mulimani, and Kulkarni (2020) further articulated that, students in university residences should then be monitors to observe all health protocols and adequate safety measures in light of the lockdown due to COVID-19. The lockdown in the two countries happened when students in the understudied universities were already on recess and most of them left their learning resources at the university residents. The study of Roby, Ashe, Singh, and Clark (2013) alluded that different universities in South Africa and Namibia have outlined strategies to support students learning from home. However, in such strategies little has been said on how students with special needs such as disabilities will be supported during the lockdown period and migration from face-to-face to online teaching. Universities in the two countries are not yet ready to make the migration of such magnitude to online teaching. Students are the primary stakeholders in institutions of higher learning, therefore, it is the interests of students that should be prioritised.

Research question

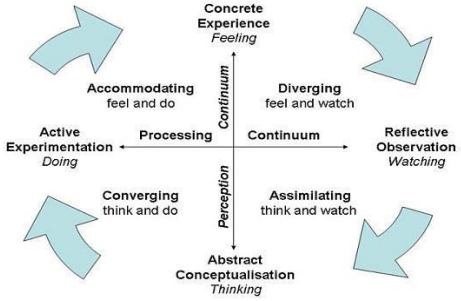
- What are the quality enhancement measures put by the higher education institutions to assure the quality of online learning in response to COVID-19?

Theoretical Framework

Brief description of Kolb's (1974) learning style in the context of Higher Education

Kolb (1974: 4) views learning as an integrated process with each stage being mutually supportive of and feeding into the next stage. It is possible to enter the cycle at any stage and follow it through its logical sequence. In the context of university teaching, the common practice is to start with theory before practice. However, effective learning only occurs when students can execute all stages of the model. Therefore, no one stage of the cycle is an effective learning procedure on its own. Kolb explains that different people naturally prefer a certain single different learning style. In the context of the universities under study, the migration of face-to-face teaching to online teaching may imply the site of students. Various factors influence a person's preferred learning style. For example, social environment, economic status of students, educational experiences, or the basic cognitive structure of the individual. Kolb models these variables in the figure below:

Figure: Kolb's Learning Style



Kolb believes that students cannot perform both the variables on a single axis at the same time (e.g. think and feel). Students' learning style is a product of choices among these variables. In the context of online teaching, teaching and learning are centered on thinking and feeling using online platforms to maximize such axis. The diagram also highlights Kolb's terminology for the four learning styles applicable to online teaching: diverging, assimilating, converging, and accommodating.

Application of Kolb's theory in the context of higher learning

Diverging (feeling and watching - CE/RO)

Students can look at things from different perspectives. They are sensitive and they prefer to watch rather than do, tending to gather information and use their imagination to solve problems. They are best at viewing concrete situations from several different viewpoints. Kolb called this style 'diverging' because these people perform better in situations that require idea generation, for example, brainstorming. People with diverging learning styles have broad cultural

interests and like to gather information. They are interested in people, tend to be imaginative and emotional, and tend to be strong in the arts. People with diverging styles prefer to work in groups, to listen with an open mind, and to receive personal feedback. In the context of online teaching, there is a need to create online platforms such as discussion tools, use of YouTube videos that allow students to watch and learn, and also learn from one another. Such practices as presented by Kolb accommodate students' different views and cooperatively promote online learning. In the context of online platforms, discussion tool promotes critical thinking on the site of students which ultimately result into deep learning (Malatji & Singh, 2018).

Assimilating (watching and thinking - AC/RO)
The assimilating learning preference is for a concise, logical approach. Ideas and concepts are more important than people. Malatji and Singh (2018) argue that students with assimilating learning styles require good, clear explanations rather than practical opportunities. In the context of online teaching, the lecturer should send some PowerPoint slides on the online platforms that introduce some key concepts that will assist the student to cope with online learning. Introducing students to key concepts would ultimately assist them to excel at understanding wide-ranging information and organizing it in a clear logical format. Students with an assimilating learning style are less focused on people and more interested in ideas and abstract concepts. Malatji and Singh (2018) further emphasized that students with assimilating learning styles are more attracted to logically sound theories than approaches based on practical value. This learning style is important for effective online teaching. In the institution of higher learning, students with this learning style prefer cooperative learning which promotes reading, online lectures, exploring analytical models, and having time to think things through.

Converging (doing and thinking - AC/AE)
Students with a converging learning style can solve problems and will use their learning to find solutions to practical issues. Such students prefer technical tasks and are less concerned with people and interpersonal aspects. Moreover, students with this learning style are best at finding practical uses for ideas and theories. They can solve problems and make decisions by finding solutions to questions and problems. In the context of online teaching, students may be given a problem that they should read, engage, discuss and find the solution using the online platforms available in the university. Students with a converging style like to experiment with new ideas, simulate, and work with practical applications. In the context of online teaching, this learning style works better when there are available technological resources in the university.

Accommodating (doing and feeling - CE/AE)
The accommodating learning style is 'hands-on' and relies on intuition rather than logic. These students use other people's analysis, and prefer to take a practical, experiential approach. They are attracted to new challenges and experiences, and to carrying out plans. They commonly act on 'gut instinct' rather than logical analysis (Malatji & Singh, 2018). Students with an accommodating learning style tend to rely on others for information rather than carry out their analysis. This learning style is prevalent within the general population. In the context of higher learning, the existing theories and literature are discussed and scrutinized to come up with new theories. This kind of learning style requires people who think critically and can analyze. Therefore, accommodating learning styles become very important for online teaching since lecturers can post a text and expect students to engage with such text and learn.

Methodology

The research approach adopted for this study was qualitative with a case study design. The purpose of qualitative research is to develop an understanding of individuals and events in their natural state, taking into account the relevant context (Leedy, 2001: 6). The interpretive paradigm was used to interrogate the transition process from face-to-face to online teaching to determine if quality enhancement measures were put in place. Data were collected through documents analysis of three universities understudied. Policies, memorandums, letters, and

all communication media of Online Distance Learning (ODL) for three universities were also interrogated to determine the extent of quality that has been put in place for online teaching. A thematic approach was used to analyse data. Firstly, transcription of raw data; organising and preparing data analysis; reading through all data; coding the data; interrelating themes/description, and finally interpreting the meaning of themes and generate the discussion (Cresswell, 2009).

Results

The results of the study are presented under the following themes: Content migration from face to face-to-online; changes in assessment practices; readiness of universities' online platforms; and quality issues.

Content migration from face to face to online

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the first reaction of the universities under study was to prepare lecturers for online teaching and immediately migrate from face-to-face to online teaching. From the documents reviewed, it came out that the universities understudied spent two to three weeks preparing online material as well as training academic lecturers on online teaching practices. Kolb (1974) in his theory argues that kind of rapid changes requires students with accommodating learning style. Kolb further argues that students with accommodating learning styles are attracted to new challenges and experiences. Therefore, online teaching and learning as a new experience to students can work well with students with this kind of learning style. However, in the three universities understudy, most students were found to fall within assimilating learning style. Students with assimilating learning styles require clear explanations rather than practical opportunities. Therefore, the swift changes from face-to-face to online was found to be a challenge to most of the students in the universities under study. The other challenge that was found during this transition was material development. The study of Calvo and Villarreal (2018) shows that one of the critical stages of preparing online platforms is the preparation of material. In this study, the preparation for online material was a success. However, due to the agency of the matter, the three universities did not consider the issue of quality assurance and quality assurance in the process of migrating from face-to-face to online teaching. The study of Luckett (2010) revealed that in any planning of a programme, quality assurance should be at the initial phase of the planning. In the three universities understudied, quality enhancement was an oversight during the planning phase and migration from face-to-face to online platforms.

Changes in assessment practices

Assessment practices play a very critical stage in any learning process. During the out broke of COVID-19, traditional assessment (face-to-face) was also affected. During the transition from one on one to online, universities understudied also changed assessment practices to fit within online platforms. From the documents reviewed, it came out that universities understudied have replaced examinations with an assignment to accommodate online teaching. Biggs (1999) in his theory of constructive alignment argues that students may avoid bad teaching but they cannot avoid bad assessment. In the three universities understudy, it came out that assessment practices were aligned with a learning outcome, teaching strategy, and critical outcomes (constructive alignment). Therefore, it can be argued that the universities successfully reviewed and revised assessment forms to fit within the online platform. The online assessment can work well for students with converging learning styles. Kolb (1974) in his theory argues that students with converging learning styles are best in practical issue issues. Therefore, students that fall within a category of this learning style can complete their online assessment.

Readiness of universities' online platforms

In terms of online readiness, the documents reviewed revealed mixed feelings. With regards to lecturers' preparedness, all three universities trained their academic lecturers for online teaching. The study of Eyre (2015) shows that for any e-Learning training, students and lecturers are at the center stage for the success of such training. As part of the training, one university also opted for a blended approach to address some of the challenges that arise during online teaching. In

this case, the university prepared all the teaching and learning material in a memory stick and such material is delivered to students as a backup in case they experience some challenges with online access. Mingaine (2013) argues that a blended approach to learning complements both face-to-face and online teaching. In this study, blended learning was found to be relevant since it assisted with remedying some of the challenges experienced during the introduction of online teaching. In implementing blended learning instructional model, the major issues of concern are:

- Lecturer-related: Academic development did not have time to research, develop and implement blended and online courses and material, and academic support (The design of online learning requires an understanding of theories on how students learn; There is a need for clear alignment between technology chosen and learning outcomes; The design and delivery of online learning requires a specialist in instructional design and technology);
- Student related: Student learning and management, student satisfaction and their perception, assessment of student performance, technological know-how, online assessment (assignments, tests, summative) caused anxiety. Therefore, the training of students on online learning was not sufficient to assist them to cope with this transition;
- Institutional: Capacity of technological infrastructure, quality assurance, cost, and benefits. Online learning and blended learning were found to be expensive for some of the universities understudied. Some students were found not to have computer and learning tools to assist them with blended and online learning;
- Socio-economic: Availability of bandwidth, connectivity in some rural areas, economic inequalities to afford devices.

Due to some of the challenges discussed above, it shows that not all the students in the three universities understudied were ready for online learning. Most students from remote areas were found to have challenges such as access to the internet. Kolb (1974) in his learning theory discusses different learning styles such as divergence, assimilating, converging, and accommodating learning styles. In this study, it came out that the universities understudy did accommodate all students as they did not cater to different learning styles during the transition to online teaching. The study of Ameen, Willis, and Abdullah (2017) revealed that the success of any online teaching depends on the availability of online resources such as computers and internet access, as well as students' and lecturers' knowledge to operate within such space. In this study, most students were concerned that the universities are rolling out online teaching without addressing discrepancies in the socio-economic status of students. From the documents reviewed, one university Student Representative Council (SRC) has dismissed the idea of online teaching until all challenges experienced by students. The SRC has also threatened the university to mobilise cyber strikes if the university continues with the online teaching.

Quality issues

The concept of quality assurance takes a centre stage at any university. Since the issue of internationalisation has been introduced in higher education, all the universities are making effort to ensure quality in their practices to meet international standards. Mohamedbhai (2020) argues that it is a fallacy to believe that online learning can be effective by merely posting a lecturer's notes online or having a video recording of the lecture. Yet, this is what is generally happening at present. Experience has shown that quality online learning requires that the teaching material is prepared by a professional instructional designer, that the lecturer is pedagogically trained for delivering the programme and the students are equally exposed to the pedagogy of online learning. Kolb (1974) argue that for successful online teaching, universities have to prepare students towards accommodating learning style. Students with accommodating learning styles are attracted to new challenges (in this case being online teaching) and find new experiences interesting. The study of Woldab (2014) revealed that the success of any e-Learning depends on the training of both lecturers and students.

The unprepared online delivery was found to have an impact on the quality of the programmes. This is unfortunate at a time when significant achievements have been made in improving the quality of teaching and learning in African higher education institutions. The worst affected programmes will be science and technology as students will be unable to access laboratories for their practicals. Yet, science and technology programmes are the ones that are most important for Africa's development. In this study, the question remains, how can higher education institutions find alternative approaches to using laboratories and, subsequently, how can they mitigate the consequences of poor-quality programmes as a result of unplanned online delivery?

Conclusion

This study concludes that the transition from face-to-face to online teaching in the three universities understudy were done abruptly without proper planning. Preparation on the side of the universities were done without considering quality enhancement measures to put in place. When preparing online teaching, it was oversite on the site of the universities to prepare and mitigate the challenges that students may experience when using online platforms.

Recommendations

This study has suggested the following recommendations to the universities understudied:

- Putting in quality enhancement measures to online platforms initiated;
- Bridging the socio-economic gap existing among students;
- Use the professional instructional designer to design online platforms and to train lecturers and students.

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