INVESTING IN ACADEMIC STAFF DEVELOPMENT TO FOSTER TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE E-LEARNING: A CASE OF ONE INSTITUTION OF HIGHER LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the central role of academic staff development for e-learning in higher education institutions globally. Most universities in developing countries such as Zimbabwe did not emphasise this, resulting in poor implementation of e-learning as a mode of delivery. While e-learning has since been introduced in most universities in the developing context, technology is mainly used as a substitute for traditional learning approaches, rather than as an innovative mode of curriculum delivery. Using a case study approach and semi-structured interviews, this study sought to explore the trajectory of nine e-learning actors at an African university to determine the role and effectiveness of contextualised academic staff development interventions in e-learning adoption. The findings of the study show that the establishment of academic staff development and the provision of transformative learning-focused training and learning design interventions led to lecturers' acquisition of e-learning knowledge and skills, including a change in their attitude towards e-learning. To be effective, therefore, academic staff development in developing contexts should provide transformative learning-focused, context-based, continuous training that emphasises relationships with lecturers to ensure sustainable and effective e-learning adoption.

Keywords: academic staff development, developing context, e-learning, higher education

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has foregrounded the role of academic staff development, especially in the use of educational technologies and the need for commensurate skills to sustain teaching and learning during the pandemic. Academic staff development, which was once at the periphery of most higher education institutions (HEIs) activities, has been catapulted into the centre of teaching and learning in HIEs globally (Czerniewicz 2021; Pelletier et al. 2022).

Zimbabwean institutions were slow to join the pre-pandemic shift to e-learning that swept through HEIs worldwide in the early part of the century (Magunje and Chigona 2021). And although these institutions have increased their investment in information communication technologies (ICTs) infrastructure over the past decade (Sakala 2019), academic staff development in the area of e-learning capacity building has not been widely foregrounded.

The acquisition of e-learning knowledge and skills by lecturers has tended to focus on technical than pedagogical aspects and has been left up to individual lecturers and ICT departments. Rienties et al. (2013a) note that HEIs typically emphasise technology investment and not lecturer capacity building in the face of academic technology growth. The failure of most HEIs in Zimbabwe to step up and provide emergency remote teaching during the pandemic is proof that e-learning effectiveness is not dependent on technology alone but on the ability of lecturers to use the technology as an effective medium of curriculum delivery (Dell and Sawahel 2020).

Successful e-learning integration requires that, besides possessing the requisite content knowledge, lecturers be equipped with pedagogical and technical know-how for effective curriculum delivery. Elliott (2018) observes that the ubiquity of technological and digital tools does not automatically lead to e-learning success, and that such tools can actually be counter-productive if poorly integrated into the learning process. Bali and Caines (2018) note that in most instances lecturers are employed for their expertise in a subject or area and lack effective pedagogical knowledge. Moreover, despite e-learning having been part of university teaching and learning for several years, research continues to reveal lecturers' shortcomings in that mode of delivery, with technology mainly being used to substitute for traditional teaching methods (Tunjera 2019).

Effective academic staff development is therefore fundamental in ensuring that lecturers meaningfully and progressively embrace e-learning as an effective mode of curriculum delivery. To achieve this, transformative learning should be the focus of academic developers as it "transforms problematic frames of reference – sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindsets) – to make them more inclusive, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change" (Mezirow 1995, 6).

THE CASE STUDY: A UNIVERSITY IN ZIMBABWE

This research investigates the case of a university in Zimbabwe that pursued blended and online programs in addition to the traditional campus-based programs offered by the institution. The institution had adopted Moodle as the institutional learning management system (LMS) as early as 2005 to facilitate web-facilitated learning for campus-based programs. The blended and online programs were meant to increase flexibility, mainly to accommodate lifelong learners who usually have other commitments that prevent them from taking part in full-time campus-based studies (Naveed et al. 2020).

From 2014 on, the university under study encouraged the use of technology for teaching and learning in traditional flexible programs that the majority of universities in Zimbabwe have been offering since 2008 in the form of block release, parallel/evening programs as well as weekend programs (Magunje and Chigona 2021). These programs were necessitated by the high demand for university education to increase the skilled workforce in the country, the result of a continuous brain drain that has affected Zimbabwe since the turn of the century (Dzinamarira and Musuka 2021; Kandiero, 2015).

The university's management therefore promoted the use of technology – in this case, the university's LMS – by lecturers, initially for blended learning but increasingly for fully online programs. In the initial stages of driving the use of technology, the ICT department was responsible for e-learning in the university context, with an educational technologist as the person in charge of the LMS (Moodle), staff training and other instructional design duties. The momentum of the e-learning initiative was variously affected by several factors, one of them being a poor understanding of e-learning on the part of university management, the ICT department, and lecturers who were supposed to lead the teaching and learning process (Magunje and Chigona 2021).

This study, therefore, seeks to highlight the role of transformational academic staff development in the integration of technology for teaching and learning in a Zimbabwean university. An important aspect of the research is how the institution under study had initially sought to introduce e-learning within the university context without an e-learning department, but later established the department with positive outcomes. The study therefore sought to answer the question:

- How can academic staff development initiatives lead to transformative learning and sustainable e-learning adoption among lecturers in the context of a developing country?

TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

The global shift from technology-oriented planning towards pedagogy-oriented planning of academic staff development demands the transformation of mindsets and the realisation of change in practical e-learning settings (Kong et al. 2017). It is therefore the role of academic staff development to ensure that the process of capacity building in e-learning knowledge and skills is clear, holistic, and meaningful. Academic staff development should therefore seek "to make the educator question their assumptions, reflect on their practice, and embrace alternatives after critically evaluating their suitability in their context, to guide their action" (Bali and Caines 2018, 22). This implies that the training process for lecturers should involve the "unlearning" of previously held beliefs and practices.

Transformational learning theory is, therefore, appropriate for contextualised training and capacitating interventions as it allows for the essential restructuring of one's viewpoint. This is enabled by critical reflection and self-examination as one acquires new knowledge (Taylor 1998). Transformational learning leads lecturers to examine their principles, conventions, and standards as they are introduced to new knowledge. They begin to change their perspectives and accommodate new philosophies, principles and prospects (Cranton 1994; Mezirow 1994; 2000).

In this study, the theory is used to assess and understand the changes that lecturers undergo during academic staff development in the field of e-learning. The study tracks their professional development through the transformational learning process.

THE ROLE OF MANAGEMENT IN TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION FOR CURRICULUM DELIVERY

The importance of management's role in the integration of technology for curriculum delivery cannot be overemphasised. According to Zhang and Yumashev (2020), the digital age calls for all levels of university management to reconceptualise education. This entails change within an institution that leads to the acceptance of technology as an effective mode of delivery. Parlakkilic (2013) observes that e-learning is a force for change and change management is essential in e-learning adoption. To ensure effective change management, HEI management has to communicate the vision and planned direction of the institution to ensure that there is alignment among all stakeholders within the university. Crew and Crew (2018) therefore suggest that HEIs have to build a flexible and responsive institutional mindset to develop a culture that embraces change. As leading actors in the integration of technology for teaching and learning, lecturers are required to spearhead the progress of e-learning in a university context. This means that they must accept e-learning to ensure its success (Sukumaran 2019).

The implementation of the mode of delivery therefore depends on its reception by lecturers, and on their willingness to accept change in teaching and learning.

According to Singh and Hardaker (2017, 738) "adoption refers to the stage in which a technology is selected for use by an individual or group of individuals; it covers that period when an individual engages in activities that lead to the adoption or rejection of an innovation". Adoption can, therefore, be enforced by management (as is the case at the institution under study), or it can be the result of decisions made by individual lecturers. Moerschell (2009) notes that the culture in academia is fundamentally resistant to technology, and anticipating potential resistance is a necessary systemic component of implementing technological change. King (2002) observed that there are challenges that lecturers face as they learn to cope with the complex new technological knowledge bases and skills that can confuse, intimidate, and frustrate users. Effective e-learning capacity building is thus crucial for lecturers and other stakeholders.

In developing contexts, however, staff development is affected by the absence of the pedagogical skills and technical capability required to set up and maintain e-learning departments (Elumalai et al. 2021). Furthermore, where e-learning departmental structures are provided, the training of lecturers is of a one-size-fits-all kind, arranged in rigid structures and pre-determined schedules and locations. This results in poor comprehension of e-learning and marginalisation for those who do not fit into the majority (Bali and Caines 2018).

IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIC STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Academic staff development is crucial in equipping lecturers with the essential knowledge and skills for effective online learning. Rienties et al. (2013b) highlight the importance of lecturers being made aware of the intricate interaction among technology, pedagogy, and cognitive content in their fields. Educational technologies staff thus need to find ways to effectively introduce e-learning to lecturers, taking cognisance of the context and culture of the university. If the training is fashioned to suit the needs of the lecturers in a particular institution, even in a specific faculty or field of study, it should be successful in achieving transformative learning.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative case study involved 9 participants, comprising a member of the university management, faculty dean and head of department, and six lecturers who had been introduced to e-learning over a period of five years. Through an interpretive paradigm, the study sought "get into the heads" of the participants to understand their thought processes and meaning making within their specific context.

Purposive sampling was used to select information-rich informants who were actively involved in the integration of technology for teaching and learning at African university. The study employed semi-structured interviews to explore the participants' journeys from when they were introduced to e-learning to the point at which they accepted this technology as an effective medium for curriculum delivery.

The member of the management team provided data on the motivation for and drive towards technology-enhanced curriculum delivery at the university, and the strategies and interventions employed by management to achieve this. The faculty dean and the head of department's (HOD) contribution provided useful data on how the introduction of technology in teaching and learning created tensions and resistance, as well as how a turnaround was secured through timely interventions. Lecturers provided important data on the interventions and how these helped them to acquire the requisite e-learning knowledge and skills while changing their attitudes towards e-learning.

To understand the trajectory of the introduction of technology for teaching and learning at the university, the researchers analysed data from interview transcripts. Key concepts from the research question and aspects of translational learning theory were brought to bear on this data (Burnard et al. 2008). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), triangulation can play a crucial role in proving the trustworthiness of a study. In this instance, triangulation was achieved through the collection of data from a range of sources and by employing a theoretical framework to guide interpretation of the phenomenon under investigation.

The study used the qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti 8 to capture and store all the data collected in a single repository. The software enabled the researchers to navigate the content of the documents through the creation and assigning of codes to portions of the text. The codes were used to create emerging concepts that endowed the data with meaning.

Since the study involved human participants, the relevant ethical protocols of both the researchers' university and of the university under study were respected. Ethical clearance was sought from both institutions to ensure that the research process caused no harm to and protected the dignity of the participants.

INTERVENTION: ACADEMIC STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Academic staff development in the institution was supported by the establishment of an e-learning department that comprised two educational technologists (one of whom is the first author of this article) and one e-learning technician. Technology-enhanced curriculum delivery requires that lecturers be adequately equipped with the skills to facilitate in online environments. It is therefore imperative to introduce and expose educators to good teaching

ideas through effective learning design (Dalziel et al. 2016).

As e-learning gathered momentum in the university network, the challenge for the e-learning department was finding ways to introduce appropriate online teaching approaches without undermining the educators, who were after all experts in their fields of specialisation (Gachago et al. 2021). After consultation with faculty management, the educational technologists recognised the need to develop a context-based intervention that focused on technology, pedagogy, content, and the purpose of the learning process.

USING TPACK AS A FRAMEWORK

The Technology, Pedagogy, and Content Knowledge (TPACK) model by Koehler and Mishra (2005) provides a basic understanding of the relationships among content, technology, and pedagogy. Figure 1, shows the TPACK framework.

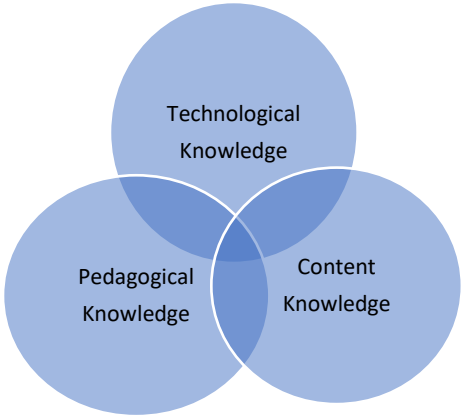


Figure 1: The knowledge components of the TPACK framework (Koehler and Mishra 2005)

Koehler and Mishra (2005) observed that the technological knowledge of the educator is important, but only in relation to the teaching context. The emphasis thus falls not on what technology can do *per se*, but on what technology can do for them as educators. An e-learning intervention incorporating aspects of the TPACK framework would provide the skills and knowledge that lecturers required to enhance their knowledge and skills in e-learning in the particular university context.

COURSE OUTLINES

The educational technologists' team under the leadership of the Director of the E-learning department sought to develop a contextualised learning design intervention that would lead to

online courses that were pedagogically sound in terms of content, structure, timing, pedagogical strategies, sequence of learning activities, and the type and frequency of assessment in the course – as well as the nature of the technology used to support learning (Paulsen 2004). The point of entry was the course outline, a mandatory teaching resource at the institution under study. For face-to-face programs, the course outline is usually a teacher-centric list of topics and sub-topics to be covered in a course (Biggs and Tang 2011), followed by a list of recommended reading, as shown in Figure 2.

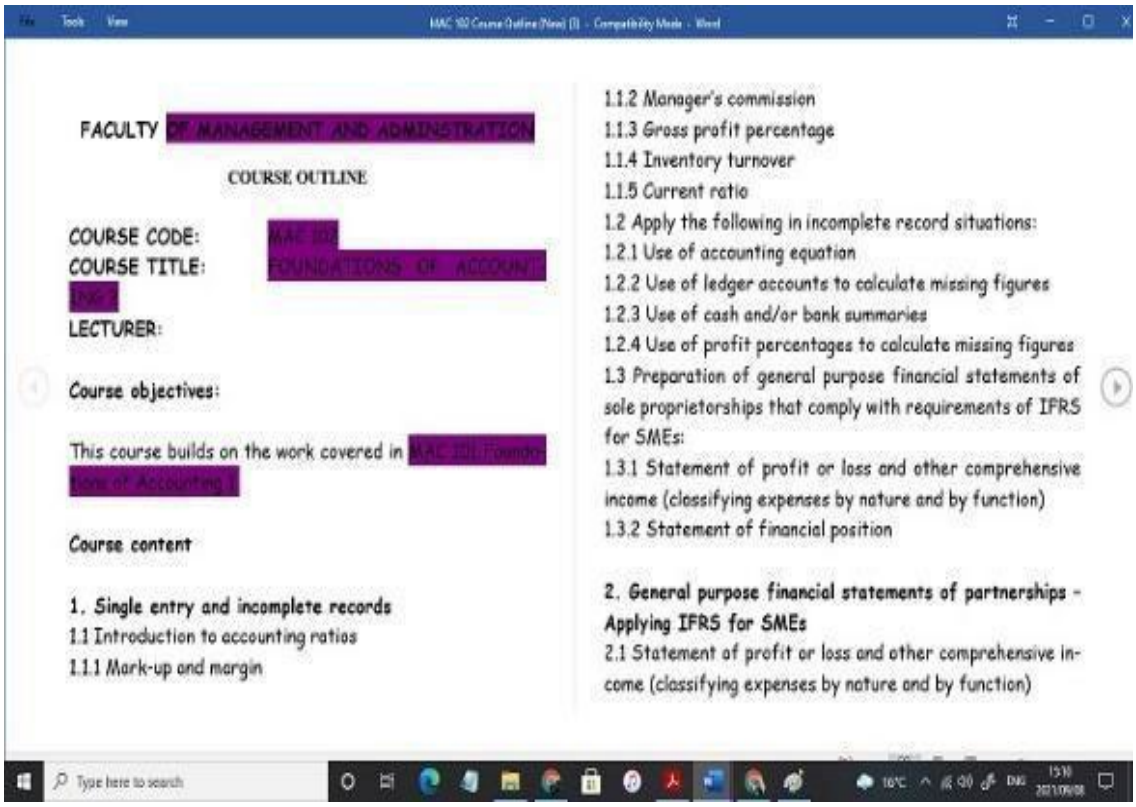


Figure 2: Sample of face-to-face program course outline

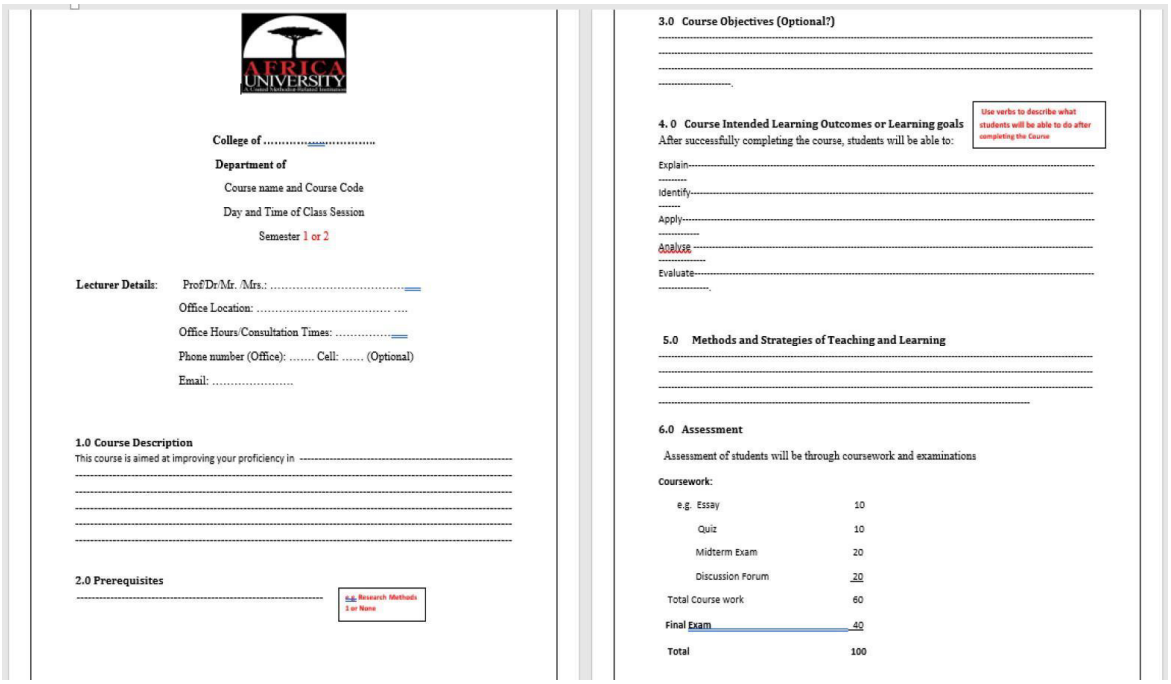
According to Bower et al. (2011), course outlines should have a uniform format that communicates outcomes, expectations and opportunities to the students. The educational technologists initiated the process by engaging the faculty leadership and then the rest of the lecturers, holding workshops on how course outlines could be revised to render them more student-centred. In this way, the e-learning department emphasised the role of the lecturers as content experts, pedagogical executors, and online facilitators in the integration of technology for curriculum delivery.

The course outline template led to a stronger connection between learning outcomes and the course content since clear learning outcomes can streamline content, focusing the learning

process on what the student will be able to achieve at the end of the course or module. In sum, the course outline training and template emphasised the constructive alignment of outcomes, content, activities, and assessment (Biggs and Tang 2011). Constructive alignment conduces to learning design that emphasises exactly what students are meant to learn, and how this should be made clear to them before teaching takes place to maximize their chances of achieving the required outcomes.

Clearly defining learning outcomes enabled lecturers to think critically about how a particular outcome might be achieved, thereby leading to effective choices in learning activities as well as assessments. The learning outcomes determined the sequence of topics and the online activities in which the students would need to engage. The result was that as the lecturer prepared the course outline, s/he was already involved in learning design and embedding pedagogically appropriate online activities into the course.

Through a weekly schedule, the course outline would show the activities to be covered, the resources to be used (and the links to these resources), and the expected dates for the activities and assessments. Figures 3a and 3b, show the template that the lecturers used to develop their online course outlines.



College of ……

Department of

Course name and Course Code

Day and Time of Class Session

Semester 1 or 2

Lecturer Details: Prof/Dr/Mr. /Mrs.: ……

Office Location: ……

Office Hours/Consultation Times: ……

Phone number (Office): ……. Cell: …… (Optional)

Email: ……

1.0 Course Description

This course is aimed at improving your proficiency in ----------

2.0 Prerequisites

----

e.g. Research Methods 1 or None

3.0 Course Objectives (Optional?)

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4. 0 Course Intended Learning Outcomes or Learning goals

Use verbs to describe what students will be able to do after completing the Course

After successfully completing the course, students will be able to:

Explain----------

Identify----------

Apply----------

Analyse----------

Evaluate----------

5.0 Methods and Strategies of Teaching and Learning

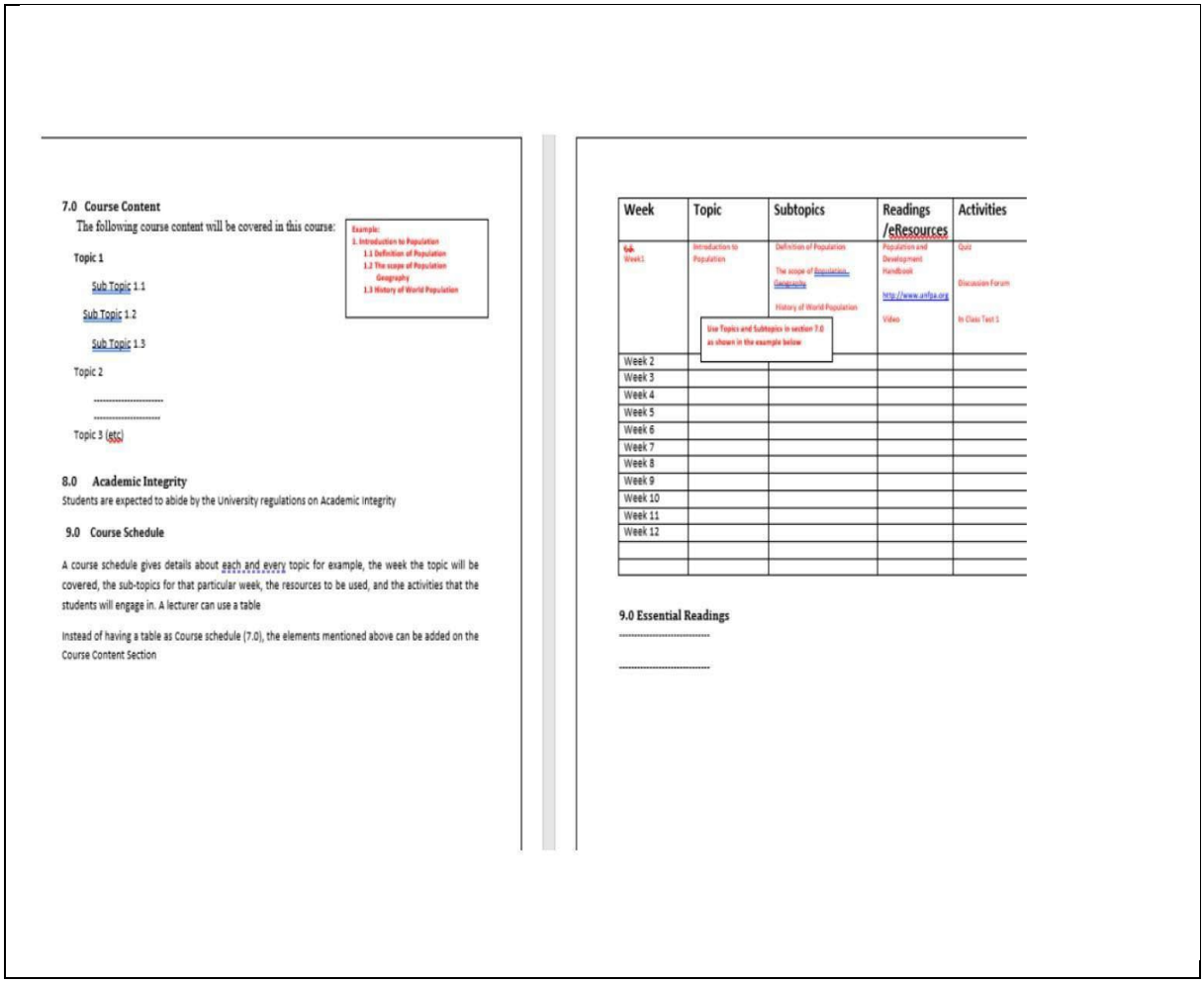
6.0 Assessment

Assessment of students will be through coursework and examinations

Coursework:

e.g. Essay	10
Quiz	10
Midterm Exam	20
Discussion Forum	20
Total Course work	60
Final Exam	40
Total	**100**

Figure 3a: Online course outline



7.0 Course Content

The following course content will be covered in this course:

Example:
1. Introduction to Population
1.1 Definition of Population
1.2 The scope of Population Geography
1.3 History of World Population

Topic 1

Sub Topic 1.1

Sub Topic 1.2

Sub Topic 1.3

Topic 2

Topic 3 (etc)

8.0 Academic Integrity

Students are expected to abide by the University regulations on Academic Integrity

9.0 Course Schedule

A course schedule gives details about each and every topic for example, the week the topic will be covered, the sub-topics for that particular week, the resources to be used, and the activities that the students will engage in. A lecturer can use a table

Instead of having a table as Course schedule (7.0), the elements mentioned above can be added on the Course Content Section

Week	Topic	Subtopics	Readings /eResources	Activities
~~6~~ Week1	Introduction to Population	Definition of Population The scope of Population Geography History of World Population	Population and Development Handbook http://www.unfpa.org Video	Quiz Discussion Forum In Class Test 1
Week 2				
Week 3				
Week 4				
Week 5				
Week 6				
Week 7				
Week 8				
Week 9				
Week 10				
Week 11				
Week 12				

Use Topics and Subtopics in section 7.0 as shown in the example below

9.0 Essential Readings

Figure 3b: Online course outline

ONLINE ACTIVITIES

Effective online learning includes the design of sequential learning activities that encourage both individual study and collaborative learning, and lead to both a profound exploration of content knowledge and regular formative assessment in varied formats that cater to student requirements and aspirations (Reinig 2010). Online activities, which Salmon (2005) refers to as e-tivities, were introduced through a course outline that necessitated the choice of activities that best satisfied a specific topic and learning outcome.

THE COURSE SITE TEMPLATE AND MANUAL

Another artifact introduced by the e-learning department as academic developers was a course site template that provided information about the online course sites. The purpose of a course site template was to ensure the effective integration of technology into the teaching process by enhancing technological skills through the LMS, thereby fulfilling the technology requirement of the TPACK framework.

The course site template, which was accompanied by a step-by-step course site manual, featured a skeletal course site for all courses on the LMS created by the e-learning department. When a lecturer logs on to his or her course, the structure of the course would be there already, so that all they would have to do is upload and update it with the necessary resources and activities.

The e-learning department thus sought to entrench e-learning in the university context through training, templates, and programs. In this way they negotiated a shift from technology-oriented towards pedagogy-oriented staff development that emphasised student-centred learning.

FINDINGS

This study sought to highlight academic staff development's role in the integration of technology for teaching and learning, especially in training and capacitating lecturers in the required technological and pedagogical knowledge and skills. Of particular interest is how this led to a change in the attitude of lecturers towards e-learning. Using themes derived from literature on e-learning and academic staff development, the findings show the trajectory of the institution as it introduced e-learning as a mode of delivery, the resistance to enforcement of the mode of delivery by lecturers, the realisation of the need for an academic staff development department by management, and the transformation of lecturers after going through training.

NEW MODE OF TEACHING

Altunisik (2012) raised the critical issue of the role of management in e-learning implementation through aligning the people within an organisation with the vision of the organisation. In this case, the management of the university under study sought to align the vision of the institution with the effective agents of e-learning in the university context: "We needed buy-in from the academic staff, the faculty, the lecturers .... Those were critical in terms of getting on board." (Participant 7).

As a member of the institution's management team, this participant highlighted the importance of the buy-in of lecturers in the university context. The initial aim was therefore to convince lecturers to use technology in teaching and learning. E-learning is a complex issue in HEIs, and its introduction requires a high level of institutional and individual transformation in teaching practice, which needs to be cautiously managed (McPherson and Nunes 2008). Another participant noted that:

"The leaders had to you know, sit the lecturers down and make it clear to them that there are certain

> processes in the university that had to change. Then the academic staff, it was a matter of continuous engagement in different fora, you know in Senate, in Cabinet, in many meetings that the university leaders, especially the VC, he would take the opportunity to explain the importance of eLearning and to impress on everyone that change was coming." (Participant 3).

The university's management thus sought to persuade lecturers of the necessity and inevitability of adopting technology as a mode of curriculum delivery.

LECTURER'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS E-LEARNING

A call by management for the adoption of technology for teaching and learning does not however necessarily achieve this outcome. According to Martins and Nunes (2016), the introduction of technology for teaching and learning entails lecturers being capacitated with an advanced set of skills and attributes (that go beyond subject-specific knowledge) for successful online delivery. The absence of these skills and attributes tends to provoke resistance among lecturers, as highlighted by the following participant: "That's why I was telling you that at that time, some of our colleagues resisted because they did not understand exactly what was going on you see ...." (Participant 5).

This statement indicates the existence of resistance among lecturers, in spite of the various communications from management about the need to change and adopt technology for teaching and learning. This resistance is attributed, with hindsight, to a lack of knowledge and skills in e-learning. It seems that lecturers felt insecure and ill-prepared to adopt e-learning because they lacked the necessary pedagogical experience and support. Ali and Magalhaes (2008) observe that, from a position of ignorance, academic staff tend to assume that e-learning creates more challenges than benefits.

Lecturers have generally taught face-to-face most of their life: e-learning is an innovation in which they need thorough grounding before coming round to acceptance. This is corroborated by the following participant's comment:

> "By now everybody is thinking of Moodle, everybody is now on e-learning, and I failed, and not just me, I thought that there was a gap in the way e-learning was introduced to people who have been used to certain approaches who now had to adopt e-learning, I felt there wasn't adequate capacity building on this person (the lecturer) who must learn this something new." (Participant 8).

Participant 8's statement shows that the introduction of technology-enhanced curriculum delivery without adequate capacity building left some lecturers feeling powerless and lacking the e-learning skills and knowledge required to work with the institutional LMS. The fact that the participant links e-learning to Moodle and the institutional LMS shows his limited

understanding of e-learning. The participant was not even aware of the pedagogical knowledge and skills needed to implement e-learning successfully.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ACADEMIC STAFF DEVELOPMENT

According to Esterhuizen, Blignaut, and Ellis (2013), academic professional development for technology integration in teaching and learning guarantees smooth adoption, and ensures that educators acquire the knowledge and skills needed in terms of both pedagogy and technology. It seems that initial attempts to introduce e-learning failed to consider academic staff development to remediate negative perceptions of e-learning as a mode of delivery.

> "Then the other thing was also: even when people embrace e-learning and even those who had wanted to get online, they needed proper training for them to become real online teachers so to speak. Because many of them still wanted to teach in the conventional face-to-face way even when they were teaching online. So, there was a need for that re-orientation of their skills and their attitudes, and teaching methods so that they fully utilize and fully benefit from the benefits of online learning and online teaching." (Participant 7).

A participant in faculty management recognised the need to re-orient lecturers in terms of skills, knowledge, and attitude to prevent a situation in which they just transferred face-to-face teaching methods to online environments. This developed into recognition of the need for an e-learning department responsible for academic staff development:

> "So, what it means is that you can have yes, the lecturers, the deans, and the administrators but you always need a department whose responsibility is to make sure that the learning processes follow the latest trends." (Participant 4).

Participant 4's comment shows that while the buy-in of various actors is important, a department dedicated to e-learning training and promotion is essential for the adoption of technology-enhanced curriculum delivery. In 2005 the university set up an office of educational technologies in the ICT department. It may not have been as effective as it might because it had been overshadowed by other information technology services in the department.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE POSITIVE ROLE OF ACADEMIC STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN E-LEARNING

Eltahir (2019) is emphatic that training lecturers in pedagogical and technological knowledge is essential in continuous professional development. The role of the e-learning department was acknowledged with appreciation by lecturers, as can be seen in the following comment:

> "They follow proper e-learning pedagogies, and they conduct training, regular training, and continuous training, and they are ready to advise any staff member old or new on what needs to be done and how it needs to be done." (Participant 9).

By providing ongoing training and support and equipping the lecturers with the required pedagogical, technical, and assessment skills to enhance their online facilitation, the e-learning department helped to surmount obstacles such as technophobia and resistance to e-learning generally. As a result of the e-learning training intervention, lecturers were empowered assume a new role as content experts and online facilitators in what they now recognised as effective curriculum delivery.

REALISING THE BENEFITS OF E-LEARNING

Adopting technology for curriculum delivery is a complex process that goes beyond adding an ICT tool to a course: the technology should transform the way lecturers teach and what they teach. Converting from face-to-face to a blended or online mode of curriculum delivery is not a self-evident process (Brouwer, Van der Pol, and Dekker 2013). Lecturers in the study were able to appreciate the pedagogical benefits of e-learning once they had gained sufficient understanding of the medium:

> "For me, it was this new technology and maybe my educational background is the one that helped me to be interested. I have qualifications in education, a diploma and a degree in Adult Education and I was more fascinated by this new technology that is coming up I wanted to know about it and once you get the technological skills, you realise e-learning is convenient as you can effectively sequence teaching content and assessment." (Participant 5).

Taylor (1998) describes transformational learning as involving the restructuring of one's viewpoint. Through the reception of new knowledge in e-learning this participant could critically reflect on her existing pedagogical knowledge, and by bringing together the existing and the new knowledge, fashion a new role for herself as an online facilitator.

Becker et al. (2017) note how perceptions of online learning have improved in recent years, increasing numbers of educators view it as a viable option for some kinds of learning. The following statement indicates the speaker's acceptance of technology-enhanced curriculum delivery:

> "You want to make things easy as possible for the student and with this eLearning platform I feel the type of student we have in our program, it's ideal because they don't have to travel all the way, you can interact with them from anywhere and I also found it exciting most of all." (Participant 6).

This lecturer appreciates the fact that students can remain wherever they are and still collaborate and interact online. Dirkx (1998) notes how transformative learning enables the adult learner to make sense of the changing world. The lecturer is even excited by this aspect of technological innovation.

CHANGE IN ATTITUDE DUE TO NEWLY LEARNED KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

According to Bensona, Anderson, and Ooms (2011), successful e-learning in HEIs occurs when there is a change in the teaching and learning culture as a result of the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. As a result of the e-learning department intervention, lecturers were able to participate in a decisive shift in the university's teaching and learning culture:

> "Yes, the e-learning department helped us so much because it was a new area. It was a new territory that we were venturing into. We were used to face-to-face teaching. So, the issue of developing a comprehensive course outline, setting up an assignment, loading an assignment, downloading it, loading a course outline, and creating – all those we had to take through the e-learning department. And they did so very patiently because some of us were born before computers and we are on the wrong side of age, so the issue of computers is not so much ... but they were patient ...." (Participant 6).

As Dirkx (1998) points out, transformative learning occurs when what is learned is regarded as being personally meaningful and valuable. This participant's statement shows an appreciation of the training in a way that has changed her personal perspective on e-learning. In appreciating the level of patience displayed by the trainers in the e-learning department, the participant shows the importance of forging relationships between academic developers and lecturers. It seems that lecturers were afforded ample time to reflect on and reconstruct their knowledge through the training process.

SELF-FULFILMENT AS A RESULT OF TRANSFORMATION

Johnson, Gueutal, and Falbe (2009) and Khalil (2013) insist on the need to educate academic staff in the use of educational technology by concentrating on innovative pedagogies instead of the technologies themselves. The support and capacity building provided by the e-learning department resulted in an access of self-confidence for the lecturers:

> "For me, it is that self-fulfilment of the new knowledge and skills I have acquired, and it is now very convenient because we don't travel anymore. I just woke up, connect to my laptop, prepare my material, and deliver my lecture. There is no hassle, so it has added some positivity to my life, and it is easy now. There is no pressure going to the campus, getting to the bus, and being back so online learning, has not changed my status and role as a lecturer, but it has simplified the way I do things." (Participant 9).

The acquisition of skills and other forms of instrumental knowledge is often associated with broader processes through which adults name, reflect on, and reconstruct aspects of their experience (Dirkx 1998). Participant 9 acknowledges the convenience afforded by e-learning, observing that online learning has simplified his work and made his life less cluttered.

DISCUSSION

The introduction of technology for curriculum delivery in a university context is a complex process. The study has shown that the introduction of e-learning without capacitating lecturers with the required e-learning knowledge and skills creates a negative backlash. Academic staff development is therefore a crucial element in the process of change as HEIs transition from traditional modes of learning to online learning. The content-driven course outline which was the starting point of the intervention introduced by the e-learning department in the study created a comfortable starting point for lecturers. Lecturers were able to engage with the new innovative mode of learning from a familiar position as they had control of the teaching instrument as content experts.

Working from the course outline enabled the lecturers to become co-creators of their own learning process and also promoted relationships with staff developers. Lecturers' comprehension for the need to adopt e-learning was enhanced by their involvement in the e-learning intervention. Interventions that are centred on the whole person have the capacity to ensure a positive attitude and effective adoption of e-learning by lecturers. Lecturers were able to reflect and link their previous pedagogical knowledge with the newly acquired technical knowledge and skills to use technology effectively in teaching and learning. Through transformative learning, lecturers were able to identify benefits of e-learning, which might lead to possibilities of them using technology critically and creatively in their respective fields in future. Careful contextualisation and respect for the perspectives of academic staff in e-learning interventions therefore result in transformative learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that e-learning interventions should be deliberately contextualised both in training and in design and concentrate on academic development focused on transformative learning that is wholesome and meaningful. To guide the action of lecturers, e-learning academic staff developers should create spaces and training interventions that enable lecturers to question their existing knowledge and values, reflect on the way they deliver the curriculum, and accommodate changes according to context.

CONCLUSION

The study has emphasised the importance of e-learning academic development in developing contexts in the digital age. E-learning training provided by these departments should be transformative learning based and adopt integration models that allow an effective entwinement of technology, content, and pedagogy. Good relationships between academic staff developers and lecturers are important as they create a common ground that leads to inclusive contextualised e-learning interventions. Lecturers are most likely to open up to the innovative mode of curriculum delivery and to realise the pedagogical and flexibility benefits of e-learning when they develop a positive attitude towards the mode of delivery. Lecturers' acceptance and comprehension of e-learning as a mode of delivery promote innovative and creative ways of integrating technology in teaching and learning leading to sustainable, wholesome, and meaningful learning experiences for students.

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