

# Students' Perceptions of Online Teaching and Learning Amid Covid-19: A Case of University of Limpopo

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**Abstract:** The paper focuses on students' perceptions of online teaching and learning amid Covid-19 lockdown at the University of Limpopo, South Africa. Coronavirus pandemic regulations imposed by South African government to curb the proliferation of the virus transformed the application of teaching and learning at tertiary institutions. In South Africa, some institutions had to grapple with migrating their contact teaching programme to a new online phenomenon. Students were also expected to swiftly adopt to the new teaching and learning approach. The study employed qualitative approach through focus group interviews. Thus, students were engaged pertaining to their experiences of online teaching and learning during lockdown period due to Covid-19 pandemic. The analysis of the qualitative data was carried through reflexive thematic analysis. The study employed six steps of thematic analysis. Therefore, the study revealed that online teaching and learning had both positive and negative impacts on the students. A number of challenges were raised i.e. poor connectivity, lecturers' unpreparedness, and lack of devices. However, some students indicated that new system has advantages such as recording of the lectures for revision purposes. In the light of this, we recommend an implementation of online teaching and learning policy at the institutions of higher learning.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, Learning, Lockdown, Perceptions, Students, Teaching

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## 1. Introduction

Globally, the Covid-19 pandemic changed the operations of many sectors, and universities were not an exception. Due to governments' strategies to curb the spread of the pandemic, all large gatherings are prohibited (World Health Organisation, 2020). Undoubtedly, majority of institutions of higher learning are renowned for large gatherings particularly in the lecture halls (McMurtrie, 2020; Wang, Lin & Su, 2021). Therefore, the South African government advised the universities to conduct their lessons online to avoid large gatherings with hope of curbing the spread of the virus. The Department of Higher Education and Training introduced multimodal teaching and learning model, which was adopted mainly by South African face-to-face contact universities (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2020). "This pandemic has forced Higher Education (HE) institutions to move to emergency remote teaching with a shift to blended or online teaching or adopt a hybrid approach of combining print materials with online learning" (Govender & Rajkoomar, 2021:1). Accordingly, the focus of this paper is on students' perceptions of online teaching and learning at the University of Limpopo. The aim of this paper is to explore students' perceptions about online teaching and learning based on their experience

at the University of Limpopo. For students at this university, multimodal model is a completely new experience given that the University of Limpopo is a contact institution which means the lessons should be face-to-face (University of Limpopo, 2020). This means that students were expected to quickly adapt to a new system without compromising quality of the education. University of Limpopo had to change the modas operandi of teaching and learning in line with new strategies from the Department of Higher Education and Training. That is, due to Covid-19 regulations, the University was compelled to move the academic activities from contact to virtual platforms. Consequently, the university had to prepare its staff and students for the new emergency remote learning.

According to Chang (2021), online teaching and learning concerns the remote facilitation of academic activities particularly teaching, learning and assessment through internet based platforms, digital technologies, and hybrid networks. However, in the context of this paper the focus is on emergency remote teaching and learning model as adopted by the University of Limpopo. In the interest of the paper's argument, the adopted definition is online teaching and learning ahead of emergency remote teaching and learning.

The Department of Higher Education and Training recommends that universities had to support students with all necessary resources for the purposes of virtual sessions (DHET, 2020). Accordingly, the university was expected to give students data bundles and laptops. This process of distributing the laptops was sophisticated as the University of Limpopo had to ensure that it complies with Covid-19 protocol as gazetted by the government. As such the distribution of laptops had to avoid large gatherings, and observe physical distance. The process was swiftly concluded, however, some students expressed dissatisfaction regarding the distribution of these resources. The major conundrum was that some students did not receive the laptops on time, and the allocation of data was cumbersome. These challenges were a hindrance towards multimodal teaching and learning model. On the other hand, the lecturers had to undergo training to enable them to facilitate lectures on the digital platforms. Accordingly, the University organised Blackboard training for all lecturers. Nonetheless, the university gave the lecturers carte blanche to use other platforms for the purposes of teaching and learning i.e. Facebook, WhatsApp, Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google meet. The perceptions of the selected students were gathered through virtual focus group interviews. The argument in this paper explicates how students perceive the multimodal teaching and learning. We therefore point out specific facets in this matter: ability of students to use digital platforms for teaching and learning; the convenience of online teaching and learning; fairness of the online assessment; effectiveness of digital platforms for learning purposes and professionalism of the lecturers to conduct online sessions. These key factors guide the main argument in this research.

## 2. Literature Review

The literature in this paper is informed by the global practices of distance teaching and learning model, blended teaching as well, and as emergency remote teaching and learning.

### 2.1 Overview of Teaching and Learning

According to Biggs (2012) and Qais (2015), teaching is a multifaceted approach of facilitating lifelong learning among students. Furthermore, Qais (2015:62) posits that, "Teaching also refers to the presentation of knowledge and demonstration of ability or skills". On the other hand, Dannis (2008) states that teaching

is a process in which information is processed, stored and produced in the existing body of knowledge. Meanwhile, learning concerns that process in which students acquire knowledge and skills from a pedagogical perspective. According to Qais (2015) and Northedge (2003), learning is a metamorphosis in which students engage new learning based on their personal backgrounds and experiences. To some extent, learning is socially constructed. Learning should take place in a community-orientated environment (Knight, 2001). Moreover, Qais (2015:62) enunciates that "Learning is acquiring facts, skills, and methods that can be retained and used when necessary".

### 2.2 Discourse of Online Teaching and Learning

This trend of distance learning is not common within the majority of institutions of higher learning in South Africa. However, in some parts of the world, online teaching and learning model is well documented. In a war-torn Afghanistan, education had to be carried out online to protect learners and students from violence in the streets (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust & Bond, 2020). It has been reported that female students were targeted by a group of rebels in Afghanistan, therefore, their lessons were conducted online. In some instances, students would access the lessons via community radio stations (Hodges et al., 2020; Bao, 2020). Similarly, in Indonesia online teaching and learning was prioritised for the purposes of reaching out to students who were unable to access their institutions (Osman, 2020; Mahler, 2021). Based on the reports from these countries students benefited a lot from online sessions. The major benefit was that all students would get to access the lessons online (Govender & Rajkoomar, 2021; Mankki, 2021). The advantage of this kind of sessions is that students have an opportunity to revisit the recordings.

Accordingly, the benefits of multimodal teaching and learning model should not be limited to its convenience (DHET, 2020; Hildebrand, 2017). Contrastingly, Hodges et al. (2020:3) highlight that "online learning carries a stigma of being lower quality than face-to-face learning, despite research showing otherwise." The challenges of online teaching and learning are well-documented particularly lack of infrastructure and resources for students (Donitsa-Schmidt & Ramot, 2020). Students are adversely affected by poor internet connectivity. Furthermore, in this paper we argue that the interest of students should

be a priority. In South Africa, the University of South Africa (UNISA) is known for carrying most of its lessons online (University of South Africa, 2021). UNISA provides open distance teaching and learning for all students. In some instances, the lecturers would record the sessions and upload them on a digital platform. This practice has been augmented due to Covid-19 regulations. Currently, UNISA is administrating the examinations on the online platforms (UNISA, 2021). Nevertheless, this institution is known for poor throughput rate. Between 2015 and 2019, UNISA's throughput rate has been below 16%. According to the reports from the Department of Higher and Training, the multimodal teaching and learning system is effective as the students' performance has improved (DHET, 2020). As much as distance learning has immensely improved the academic performance of students, the quality should be scrutinised.

According to Tannert and Groschner (2021) and Erarslan (2021), students prefer distance learning because of its convenience. Students do not mind to attend the lectures based on their availability (Cutri & Mena, 2020). Thus, they are managing their time and workload for different modules. Also, online teaching and learning model is imperative for self-study (Ackermann, 2021; Ceallaigh, 2021). Undoubtedly, self-study is one of the fundamental aspects of lifelong learning. On the other hand, some scholars suggest that distance learning is effective because enables lecturers to introduce new assessment models. According to Carrilo and Flores (2020:12), "key issues in the design of effective online learning environments included an accurate pedagogical approach, relevant and authentic assignments, and appropriate tools and technology". Assessment models such as self-assessment, peer review and peer assessment are ideal for students during distance learning. Moreover, the convenience of online teaching and learning model should not adversely affect the quality of education (Thomas & Bryson, 2020; Bryson & Andres, 2020). International experts suggest that students would prefer to learn online to improve their chances of receiving a higher grade. Covid-19 unceremoniously disrupted the 2020 academic in almost all 26 universities in South Africa (DHET, 2020).

### 2.3 Readiness of Students for Online Teaching and Learning

Accordingly, some universities were not ready to immediately migrate from contact teaching and

learning to the multimodal teaching and learning. Seemingly, some students were not ready for the new normal (Ng, 2021; Marji, Sudjimat, Sugandi & Nurhadi, 2020). Most of the students were worried about their future. The resumption of the academic activities albeit online left some students in bewilderment. Some students did not have capacity to immediately start learning online due to various challenges (Shaaban, 2021; Nazari & Seyri, 2021). To some extent, students were not well capacitated to attend their sessions online (Moorhouse, 2020).

### 3. Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework compounds critical aspects of a study, which is imperative in knowledge production. The theory serves as a lens which magnifies a specific discourse. Thus, this paper adopts Social-connectedness and Cognitive Connectedness Schema (SCCS) theory developed by Marie Sontag in 2009 (Sontag, 2009). The purpose of this theory is to cover a lacuna that is created by evolving approaches to teaching and learning model. According to Sontag (2009), it is cardinal to use a new lens when critiquing new platforms for learning. Sontag (2009) posits that students should be exposed to technologically oriented learning to cover the gap. Whether the institution adopts mobile learning, blended learning, or emergency remote teaching and learning it is fundamental to employ new theories to enhance high premium teaching and learning (Hehir, Zeller, Luckhurst & Chandler, 2021). Therefore, this paper is aligned with SCCS theory to explicate the fundamental aspects of the argument. It is worth noting that students are at the forefront of this paper. And the theory extrapolates the significance of online learning model for the students.

Moreover, this concept of SCCS is multifaceted as it links the use of technology for learning purposes which emphasises "connectedness" and the actual learning "social cognitive". We appreciate that students are exposed to modern technologies. The age of group of the current students is overwhelmingly exposed to technology and internet. Accordingly, the use of technology and internet to engage and teach this group of students is commendable. Sontag (2009) postulates that students should be allowed to connect with their studies through hybrid systems. And Sontag (2009) elucidates that students' social background of using social media and other digital platforms should be complemented with new theories. Students should be allowed to create their

own networks through online teaching and learning. In the context of this paper, the background of students is important because some of students at the University of Limpopo were not exposed to before the adoption of multimodal teaching and learning model. This theory enables us to magnify this phenomenon. Undoubtedly, SCCS is apt for the purposes of engaging the gathered information in this study.

#### 4. Research Design and Methodology

In this paper, exploratory design was used as an overall plan for the study. Bitsch (2005) and Du Plooy (2009) define exploratory research design as a critical blueprint for the purposes of exploring a phenomenon. Accordingly, this design is apt in this study because we explore students' perceptions of online teaching and learning amid Covid-19 pandemic. This design enabled the study to explore students' perceptions about online teaching and learning which included; the effectiveness of online teaching and learning; the challenges of online education among students; the preparedness of lecturers; the benefits of the system and fairness of online assessments. These key themes informed the manner in which we gathered data from suitable participants.

The method used in this paper is qualitative in nature, which is consolidated by our discussion about sampling, data collection and analysis. This method entails that the researcher should study a phenomenon with a purpose to examine it without any augmentation. In the interest of this research, qualitative research strand was employed to collect information from the selected students. Accordingly, these students were part of the virtual focus group interviews. Furthermore, this method guided how we engaged the population and sampling procedure, data collection method, data analysis and ethical considerations. These approaches are discussed in the following sub-sections.

##### 4.1 Population and Sampling

The sampling procedure in this study was not sophisticated because researchers had sufficient knowledge about the ideal subject. Since the focus was on the university students, we used purposive sampling technique within non-probability sampling method. This sampling technique enables the researchers to select the participants based on their experience, knowledge about the subject and their

eagerness to take part in the study. Therefore, this sampling technique was employed to select the willing participants among students at the University of Limpopo. The first focus group had five participants, subsequently, the one consisted of four participants. And the third group was made up of six, lastly the fourth group comprised five members. In total, 20 participants took part in this study.

##### 4.2 Collection of Data

For this study, data were collected through focus group interviews. Four focus groups were administered for the purposes of gathering pertinent information about students' perceptions concerning online teaching and learning amid Covid-19 regulations. This data collection tool was employed to engage students about their perception pertaining to online teaching and learning. The focus group set up enabled students to express their different views (Nilsen, Sletvold & Olsen, 2020). The focus group interviews were moderated by the authors of this paper. Unlike, the traditional focus group interviews, in this case the group interviews were administered virtually through different virtual platforms, i.e. Zoom, Microsoft teams, and Google meet to administer the sessions.

The process of collecting data through focus group interviews was not conducted in a vacuum. Thus, drafted key questions based on the aim of the study were used as a guide. The following key questions were derived from the aim of this study:

- a. Students' familiarity with online teaching and learning;
- b. Effectiveness of the online teaching and learning platforms;
- c. The challenges of online teaching and learning for students;
- d. Students' experiences of internet connectivity during online sessions;
- e. The fairness of online assessments;
- f. The impact of online teaching and learning on the quality teaching, learning and assessment;
- g. The level of professionalism in the online teaching and learning activities.

These key factors guide the crux of the matter in our argument. Students provided their responses based on these key issues. Therefore, the themes that were deduced in this paper were generated from the questions that we posed to students.

### 4.3 Analysis of Data

Data analysis is the imperative way of deducing meaning from the raw data (Bryman, 2004). In this paper, thematic content analysis was adopted as the key method of analysis the qualitative data. Six steps of conducting thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) have been adopted for paper. These steps include familiarising yourself with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming the themes and producing report.

### 4.4 Ethical Considerations

As far as ethical considerations are concerned, approached all participants were approached with explicit explanation about the study. Thus, researchers requested the consent of the participants to participate in the virtual focus groups. Additionally, we informed the participants that their identity will be sealed in the final report of the investigation. Also, their right to withdraw their participation was promised during the focus group sessions. Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants was taken into consideration throughout the study.

## 5. Results and Discussion

The analysed data below has been divided into themes based on the thematic analysis conducted for the study. The generated themes were guided by the aim of the study and the data itself.

### 5.1 Theme: Students' familiarity with online teaching and learning

Students who took part in the virtual focus group interviews provided different perceptions about familiarity of online teaching and learning. One participant pointed out that online teaching and learning model is new for them. However, the participant elucidated that they had to adapt to new system of learning. Also, the respondent posited that online teaching and learning is effective. On the other hand, some students stated that online teaching and learning is not easy for them, and

further said they would prefer to revert to face-to-face learning in the future. The following responses were extracted from the data:

*[A1] Not familiar. It's a new thing, I had to adapt to learn, to adapt but it works and effective, looking at the situation of the country, the goal is to stop the spread of the Covid-19. I will become familiar with time because it seems like this pandemic will be with us for too long.*

*[A2] No, it is something that I did not expect, and I had to force myself to adapt, and would still go back to traditional face-to-face learning if I am given a chance.*

This finding is supported by Almendingen, Morseth, Gjolstad, Brevik and Torris (2021) who found that students felt that learning outcomes would be harder to achieve due to the sudden shift to online education.

### 5.2 Theme: Effectiveness of the online teaching and learning platforms

Students have contrasting views about the effectiveness of the online teaching and learning platforms. On one hand, some students mentioned that online teaching and learning platforms are easy to manage. Additionally, they reckon there is no need for the university to revert to physical teaching and learning model. Some of them believe that Blackboard and Google meet are convenient platforms for learning as the sessions are always recorded. On the other hand, some students are not content with online teaching and learning model. They also indicate that some lecturers are struggling to use Blackboard for the purposes of teaching. Moreover, one of them stated that online teaching and learning model does not stimulate proper teaching and learning. The student also stated that sometimes students do not study for the tests because the assessments are administered online which allows them cheat. These are some of the responses from the participants:

*[A1] Sometimes the lecturer may attempt to upload the recorded lesson and it doesn't successfully upload and students cannot the access the material.*

*[C1] Well, personally I don't think there are any benefits, because with online learning, we are not really learning, we are not learning anything,*

*we receive information, and nobody explains it thoroughly. During online tests, we copy answers from textbooks for the sake of progressing, and it doesn't benefit the students, yes it does benefit the institution in resuming with academic activities.*

This finding correlate with what has been discovered by Coman, Tiru, Stanciu and Bularca (2020) who established that some universities were not ready for online learning. Consequently, most institutions were faced technical challenges, followed by academics' lack of technical skills and their teaching style was not appropriately adapted to the online environment.

### 5.3 Theme: The challenges of online teaching and learning for students

Students highlighted the challenges that adversely affect online teaching and learning. And most of the challenges are related to lack of infrastructure i.e. internet connectivity and data bundles. Students who participated in this research elucidated that connectivity is one of the main problems for online learning. Some reiterated that lecturers were not ready to migrate from face-to-face teaching to online teaching and learning. They also mentioned that students do not study due to online teaching and learning. Additionally, some students claimed that lecturers struggle to conduct the sessions on the digital platforms. These are some of the perceptions from the participants:

*[B3] Data is a problem, and most students reside off-campus and the lecturers are pushing the notion of "no student will be left behind". We experience challenges from our lectures, because some of them are old and unable to operate online platforms and most of the time they hide behind and say, we are experiencing network challenges and in reality, they cannot operate these platforms. There is one lecturer that I know, she just records some videos of her just reading the slides and thereafter uploads the recording and would say, it is your responsibility to view those recordings and in most instances we really do not understand what she is teaching about. We watch those videos without getting feedback, sometimes she would say we must consult but when we do, she blue ticks us on WhatsApp.*

*[D1] Sometimes when I try to login, it doesn't go through and keep saying my connection is broken.*

*[D2] Connectivity, and as students we no longer studying to understand and gain knowledge, we focus on passing and I feel like Blackboard should be enhanced to have cameras to monitor online assessments.*

Mahyoob (2020) also established that some of the challenges faced by students when embarking on virtual learning include some technical issues when using the Blackboard tool, such as online class access, class materials downloading, audio, and video playing. Some experience connectivity challenges due to the digital divide which exists.

### 5.4 Theme: Students' experiences of internet connectivity during online sessions

According to the responses from the participants, internet connectivity is a serious conundrum for online teaching and learning model. As already stated in the previous themes, students agree that internet connectivity is a hindrance in the online activities including during their assessments. Some of them indicated that due to this problem they struggle to attend online classes let alone to write assessments. These are some of the responses extracted from the data:

*[A1] The internet wouldn't connect on some classes and end up missing them, on a scale of 1-10, I would give it 3/10, and I never attended class while at home.*

*[A2] The network would sometimes kick you out from the on-going class, it disconnects, on a scale I would give it 4/10 to moderate.*

*[D2] Network connectivity is a problem for those not favoured by geographical location, it disconnects in the middle of assessments.*

This finding is supported by Ferri, Grifoni and Guzzo (2020) who established that in most cases students face challenges ranging from unreliable internet connectivity, lack of necessary electronic devices. Some pedagogical challenges faced by students pertaining online learning include lack of digital skills to use technology for learning purposes.

### 5.5 Theme: The fairness of online assessments

Students have contrasting perceptions about the fairness of online assessments. Some students

posited that online assessments are not fair because the lecturers set difficult questions. Also, they mentioned that the online assessment questions are cumbersome. Contrastingly, the other students stated that online assessments are fair and too simple since they can always open the notes to search for answers. Furthermore, one student explicated that multiple-choice questions are not challenging, and she claimed that is not good for quality of their education. These are some of the answers from the participants:

*[A1] No, the questions were not fair, the assessments were difficult, and lecturers fails to understand what they were actually asking from the students. The questions were not clear.*

*[C1] When students are not monitored, we cannot conclude fairness, even with cameras, nobody can know what's in front of you, while others struggle with connectivity and when it gets stable, time would have elapsed. Others refer by opening multiple tabs on the computer.*

*[D3] They are not much fair, because if you can check some of the things that are being asked, I can say they are simple, with multiple choice questions, you do not have to struggle there and given that you are in your room, you can get a material and refer. And we don't get feedback with these online assessments.*

In order to resolve some of the challenges raised above, Gamage, de Silva and Gunawardhana, (2020) submit that for better management of academic integrity during online delivery and assessment during Covid-19, resources and training are of significance in raising awareness and spreading information on academic integrity policies, practices and developmental tools to alleviate academic misconduct.

### **5.6 Theme: The impact of online teaching and learning on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

According to the participants in this study, online teaching and learning has both positive and negative impacts on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They stated that the system has negative impact on the quality of their education because of a lack of communication between students and their lecturers. One student revealed

that they once wrote an online examination without prior publication of their semester marks. In addition, the student claimed that even the head of department was clueless about this case. On the other hand, some students asserted that quality of learning is compromised because they do not study for the assessments since the tests are administered online. They further posited that the primary aim is to pass the module which is easily achievable through online teaching and learning system. Some of them lamented that the lecturers are not making efforts to engage with students outside of the online classes.

*[C2] The problem is that, we are not given a platform to engage in the conversation with the facilitators and it instils the mentality of laziness our minds, most of us tend to do more of copying, we recently written a test online and almost everyone passed. We don't learn, we are doing everything for the marks, I don't know if I should say the facilitators are lazy to set the appropriate questions that one cannot refer.*

*[D3] We wrote a module exam without its semester mark, then approached HOD, and she was confused to see students writing without qualifying to write the exam.*

*[D4] I can say both negative and positive. Negatively, the interaction and engagement between the students and the lecturers is gone. The students utilize Blackboard to download the videos, they no longer engage with the lecturer and on that way, many things are left out. Positively, students can easily catch up with recorded sessions, it saves time of travelling and even the preparations for fourth industrial revolution.*

Zalat, Hamed and Bolbol (2021) are also of the view that technological skills for both students and academics enhances the use of online platforms for educational purposes, which ultimately increases the educational value and experience of both students and lecturers.

### **5.7 Theme: The level of professionalism in the online teaching and learning activities**

Students have opposing perceptions about the level of professionalism in the online teaching and learning activities. Some students enunciated that lecturers are professional which makes online teaching and

learning convenient for both students and lecturers. Contrastingly, other students indicated that there is a lack of professionalism in the online teaching and learning activities. They argue that the lecturers are not well skilled to facilitate online classes and assessments. Also, students are dissatisfied with the manner in which lecturers communicate as some lecturers do not respond to their messages particularly on WhatsApp. In addition, one student stated that during an online class a lecturer was not audible, consequently, the session was annulled.

*[B1] There is no negativity, they are all professional. But as for older lecturers in terms of technology they are still far behind and this makes them to look incompetent.*

*[B3] Our lecturers are full of excuses, there is this lecturer, we had two sessions with him and it was mathematics and later on, complained about connectivity challenges and after posted a scope for test one to say we are writing and recently we were compiling a legal petition to challenge the dates because he hasn't covered enough. There is this other lecturer that uses Blackboard app and we have been pleading with her to record the sessions, she cannot even record, with that I can say professionalism is compromised.*

*[D2] Some of them are skilled and some are not, just last week, we had this lecturer and it was his first time using Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, then we did not attend, during that time his microphone was on but he was not audible, so we ended up dismissing the class, I feel like some lecturers haven't received training.*

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The responses of the participants magnify the multifaceted challenges and opportunities emanating from the online teaching and learning model. This study taught us about the importance of exploring the perceptions of the relevant parties in a problem of this nature. The perceptions of students about online teaching and learning show that the University of Limpopo was implementing the emergency multimodal teaching and learning for the first time. And this aspect is perpetuated by a lack of readiness to carry out online academic activities. The infrastructure and resources were detrimental for advancement of efficient online teaching and learning. Firstly, students highlighted

that poor internet connectivity is a hindrance which adversely affected attendance of classes. Also, they revealed that this challenge is common in rural areas. Secondly, it has been accentuated that data bundles are not sufficient to last a month. Lastly, in some cases students are adversely affected by national power cuts i.e. load reduction and load shedding administered by power utility, Eskom.

Students were not satisfied with academic staff's skills and capabilities to execute online teaching and learning activities. As a result, students believe that lecturers were not properly trained to teach online classes. This problem overlapped to the manner in which assessments are administered. Students also pointed out that most of the online assessments are not fair. Furthermore, they argue that some of the online assessments are too difficult. In contrast, some students expressed dissatisfaction regarding the use of multiple-choice tests. They purport that these kind of assessments are not ideal for the purposes of stimulating lifelong learning. Moreover, students claimed that online teaching and learning is not efficient for high premium education. Poor communication between students and lecturers has been highlighted as one of the eroding aspects of online teaching and learning at the University of Limpopo. Students explicitly stated that some lecturers do not respond to their messages.

In addition, students are not satisfied with professionalism of some of the lecturers. They lamented that some lecturers do not publish semester marks before they sit for examination. Similarly, other students indicate that some lecturers are not professional because they do not give students feedback after assessments. These issues suggest that there is a room for improvement in ensuring that online teaching and learning is effective. Accordingly, we recommend that academic staff should be thoroughly trained to ensure that they have sufficient knowledge and skills to teach online classes. Since students emphasised that communication is major problem, we therefore, recommend that the lecturers should be exposed to different platforms for digital communication. And a communication workshop is necessary. We also recommend that students should be inducted to understand different aspects of online teaching and learning. The study recommends that the infrastructure and resources should be improved. It is worth noting that the institutions have nothing to do with poor internet connectivity in some areas, however, the

University through relevant structures can advocate for enhancement of network connectivity in the affected areas. In addition, the data bundles challenge should be addressed according to the needs of the students. However, the University should consider that students entirely dependent on the internet access to be part of online teaching and learning. Based on the issues raised by students, the improvement of online teaching and learning should be multipronged. These issues should be expeditiously encapsulated drafted in policy. Thus, the University of Limpopo should meticulously curate a new policy on remote teaching and learning. Lastly, we recommend that students should be at the forefront of new strategies to eradicate all challenges that negatively affect online teaching and learning.

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