INQAAHE-SAQAN WEBINAR

Quality assurance of online and blended higher education: The Southern African experience

Student-teacher experiences in online learning: The Lesotho example

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Presentation structure

- The study context
- Reviewed literature
- Methodology
- Results
- Emerging themes
- Recommendations

The study context

- Adult Education (an academic programme in HE)
- ODL in a dual mode institution
- Online learning – BL component
- Action research - adoption and implementation of blended learning
- Online collaborative learning (OCL) (Harisam, 2012)
- BL Adoption Framework (Graham et al, 2013)
- The Arena Framework (Davies, 2018) – interconnectness and interrelatedness of ecosystems within the global sphere – with the course level being core

Reviewed literature

- **Student and staff participation** is a key principle in the development of strong quality assurance systems (Loukkola & Zhang, 2010)
- **Success factors** in online learning: Instructors' attitudes, expertise, and support to learners; quality tutor and learners support service, LMS quality (Sun, Tsai, Finger, Chen, & Yeh, 2008; Lee, 2010; Diep et al., 2017); time-management, policy-level intervention (Broadbent, 2017); and students' general self-efficacy (Diep et al., 2017)
- **Challenges**: accessibility, affordability, flexibility, learning pedagogy, life-long learning and educational policy (Murgatrotd, 2020); practical issues around physical workspaces conducive to different ways of learning (Pokhrel and Chhetri, 2021).

Reviewed literature cont.

- **Benefits**: Flexibility and accessibility (Means et al., 2009; Van Doorn & Van Doorn, 2014);
- Mechanisms for monitoring learner participation and performance should be integrated into the learning management systems (LMS) or platforms (COL, Lesotho CHE, 2021).

Methodology

Population in 4 AR Cycles

AR Cycles 1, 2 and 3

- National level
- Institutional level
- **Course level – Tutors and learners' technology experience**
  - Baseline survey
  - Pilot study

AR Cycle 4 – in progress

- **Course level – Tutors and learners' technology experience**
  - Qualitative data – open-ended questionnaires (12 tutors; 14 learners)

A comparison of the learners' online experience in AR Cycle 3 and AR Cycle 4

Rank order	AR Cycle 3 Benefits Experienced/perceived.	AR Cycle 4 Evidenced benefits	AR Cycle 3 Challenges Experienced/perceived.	AR Cycle 4 Evidenced challenges	AR Cycle 3 Enablers Experienced/perceived.	AR Cycle 4 Evidenced benefits
1	Enhanced digital literacy.	Cost-effectiveness	Limited digital literacy.	High cost of devices and Internet	Prior technology experience.	Use of WhatsApp
2	Cost-effectiveness.	Enhanced digital literacy/induction	Limited access due to inadequate ICT infrastructure and resources off-campus.	Unconducive learning environment (e.g. hilltop, home – social and economic responsibilities, WhatsApp discussion, typing, voice-notes all at once, some voice notes "too long")	One-on-one support by researcher or training facilitator.	Time-management skills (e.g. studying at night)
3	Access to learning resources and information.	Flexibility in teaching and learning and convenience	Limited time to practice their newly acquired ICT skills.	Technical and network problems.	Availability of ICT resources off-campus	Enhanced digital literacy and independent study
4	Communication (learner-teacher, and learner-learner).	Records for ease of reference and catching up when classes were missed	Technical and network problems.	Poor learner participation/interaction/engagement (linked to unconducive environment)	Peer support.	Peer support (e.g. online study group)
5	Flexibility in teaching and learning.	Ease of access to learning, resources and information	Limited ICT resources on campus.	Inability to verify the presence of learners, see them and interact meaningfully with them		Regular online class attendance and participation
6	Interaction and collaboration with other learners.	Independent learning	None	Limited ICT infrastructure and resources on campus (e.g. LMS, Internet, computers, etc.).		Interaction peers and tutors (posting areas of difficulty to the group)
7	None	Open book tests		Fast-paced learning through WhatsApp voice notes		Managing data usage
8		Enhanced performance		Lack of typing skills		Self-motivation
9		Enhanced time-management skills		Too many WhatsApp groups		

A comparison of the tutors' online experience in AR Cycle 3 and AR Cycle 4

Rank order	AR Cycle 3 Benefits Experienced/perceived.	AR Cycle 4 Evidenced benefits	AR Cycle 3 Challenges Experienced/perceived.	AR Cycle 4 Evidenced challenges	AR Cycle 3 Enablers Experienced/perceived.	AR Cycle 4 Evidenced benefits
1	Access to information and resources	Flexibility in teaching and learning and convenience	Time constraints.	High cost of devices and Internet	Access to ICTs	Use of WhatsApp
2	Enhanced digital literacy	Cost-effectiveness	Low digital literacy.	Technical and network problems	Digital literacy	Attendance register
3	Enhanced learner-teacher and learner-learner communication and interaction	Access to learning resources and information (Ease of access)	Limited access due to inadequate ICT infrastructure and resources off-campus	Poor learner participation/interaction		Sending alerts, material and topics for discussion before hand
4	Enhanced digital literacy	Records for future reference	Limited ICT resources on campus (e.g. desktop computers and Wi-Fi).	Limited ICT infrastructure and resources on campus (e.g. LMS, Internet, computers, etc.)		Ensuring participation by calling learners by name and asking them questions
5		Enhanced teaching and learning		Late registration of students		LMS (THUTO)
6		Enhanced digital literacy		Uncontrolled learner access to tutors		Google classroom
7		Immediate feedback		Unconducive learning environment (e.g. hilltop, home)		
8				Poor performance of learners		
9				Inability to verify the presence of learners		

Emerging themes

- Amid the challenges identified in the study, a certain level of transition has been evidenced by the priorities of the tutors and learners in online learning;
- There is an opportunity for creative and collaborative knowledge-building for development of internal QA policy and frameworks.

Recommendations

- More investment by NUL in ICT infrastructure and resources – which includes intensified use of the LMS with in-built QA mechanisms;
- Enhanced training and support for tutors and learners; Policy development (QA)
- Development of Internal QA mechanisms from course design level which entails collaboration, cooperation, creative solutions and willingness to learn from others and try new tools as educators, parents and students share similar experiences (Doucet et al., 2020);
- Development of evidence-based and contextually relevant institutional and national QA policies and frameworks.

Thank you for your attention!