



Lemeko, P.A. (2024). Student's feedback on lecturer online instruction competence at a University of Technology. In Khohliso, X.D. & Mgqwashu, E.M. (eds), *Perspectives on curriculum as praxis: implications for Higher Education pedagogy*. Potchefstroom: Axiom Academic Publishers, pp.197-223.

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## CHAPTER 7

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### Student's feedback on lecturer online instruction competence at a University of Technology

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#### Abstract

The focus of this study is on the challenges and problems, as well as opportunities brought about by online learning and teaching in higher education. It seeks to capture students' perspectives on online learning and instruction based on the instructors' competence; thus attempting to map future teaching and learning models. To generate data, a quantitative survey and interviews were used. A questionnaire with both closed- and open-ended questions to determine both the breadth and depth of students' perceptions of lecturer competence was used to generate quantitative and qualitative data. Three themes emerged from the data: planning and preparation, course execution and learner support.

**Keywords:** online instruction competence, end users, online learning.

### 7.1 Introduction

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Our education system is expected to meet the requirements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Harnessing technology for innovative teaching and learning will allow both the lecturer and student to have effective learning experiences. To transform learning and teaching experiences we need to include technology in our day-to-day teaching and learning. As institutions of higher learning, we need to respond to the demands of innovation. These demands can be addressed by effectively including technology in our teaching and learning environment. Advancements in technology will open paths for innovation and experimentation in higher education.

In South Africa, as well as other countries throughout the world, the entire educational system from primary to tertiary levels has been challenged by restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 lockdown period that began in early 2020. During that time, many facets of society were affected in all spheres of influence, and education was one of the hardest hit as learning could not continue physically (Mehić & Hadžić 2020). This is because COVID-19 is a highly contagious illness caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) (Remuzzi & Remuzzi, 2020). Online learning thus quickly replaced on-campus schooling (Martin, 2020). Some colleges and universities already provide tuition through online platforms, but many do not. Consequently instructors and learners alike faced the challenge of becoming used to a radically different kind of learning when all the coursework had to be delivered online. It is thus crucial for the tertiary sector to assess the effects and success or failure of this unprecedented change in the delivery mode because these "remote learning regimes" (Martin, 2020) are likely to persist in alignment with the fourth and some parts of the world, the fifth industrial revolutions where artificial intelligence and digital technologies are seizing workspaces. Only a few

studies have since focused on the evaluation of the effectiveness of online instruction; hence the rationale for the current study.

The transformation in the worldwide industrial revolution and the expansion of knowledge have immensely influenced the agenda of global governance and management in higher education (Perumal, 2010). This change has led countries and government authorities to develop higher education policies that adopt business-like practices to manage competition in the global market environment. Rapid changes in these universal market environments have resulted in an increased demand for the advancement of economic growth and social improvement (Mtshali & Sooryamoorthy, 2019). As the drivers of economic growth and development, universities have a significant role in meeting the needs and demands of advancing the economic and social components (Cloete, Bunting & Maassen, 2015). South Africa is no exception, as commanding powers are driving increased societal demands for higher education services (Du Pre, Reddy & Scott, 2004).

Higher education in South Africa entails numerous universities that offer a varied educational pathway to students. These universities are usually classified under three types (Bunting & Cloete, 2010; Masinde & Roux, 2020). The first type of university is known as a traditional university, in which formative and professional degrees such as Bachelor of Science (BSc) and Bachelor of Engineering (BSc Eng) are offered. At a postgraduate level, this type of university offers honours degrees and a wide range of master's and doctoral degrees. The second type of university is known as the University of Technology (UoT), which is primarily established to offer vocational or career-focused undergraduate diplomas and BTech, which serves as a topping qualification for diploma graduates. In this case, at the postgraduate level, the UoT offers a restricted number of master's and doctoral degrees. The last type of university is known as a comprehensive

## CHAPTER 7

university that offers programmes of both the traditional university and the UoT. Although all three types of universities are essential towards advancing societal and economic growth within a country, this chapter focuses on the UoT.

UoT is a type of university that focuses on offering career-oriented schooling and training in applied engineering, sciences, technology, and related fields. It emphasises problem-solving and career-directed courses by providing students with practical skill development and theoretical knowledge. Also, it emphasises innovation, research and industrial partnerships to produce graduates who are equipped with technical expertise and are capable of contributing towards societal and economic growth and development in a country.

### 7.2 Online instruction competency

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Early research on the difficulties associated with online instruction found that students were not engaged (Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020), lecturers lacked pedagogical and technological competency (Hadar *et al.*, 2020), and lecturers and students alike needed more time to get used to online teaching (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020). During COVID-19, online instruction competency and information and communication technologies (ICT) tools played a crucial role in assisting lecturers in adjusting to online instruction. Since having online competency is essential to maintaining connection and engagement in the online environment, the lecturer's online competence was particularly significant in stopping the continuity of social contact with students and offering online instruction to the students.

Green and Bettini (2020) explain that online instruction competency includes lecturers' self-perceptions of their knowledge and skills, their assurance in using online instructional technology, their capacity to

involve students in remote learning and their online classroom management. Online learning refers to education that makes use of a variety of internet-based technologies, including chat, email, YouTube, online, text messaging, audio and video conferencing that are transmitted over computer networks to deliver instructional materials. Online learning is defined by Singh and Thurman (2019) as an asynchronous or synchronous learning environment that makes use of multiple devices and is always accompanied by internet access. This allows for communication not only between students and educators but also between students and lecturers themselves, even though it does not occur simultaneously. When creating and delivering online courses, online lectures take on a variety of tasks and exhibit a range of competencies. The lecturer's voice is one of the key components of online instruction.

Several ways have been used to classify competencies for online competency, and they have been classed at different levels in the literature. Fatimah (2020) outlines and divides the abilities or capabilities of instructors into five categories: content expertise, technical proficiency, online communication skills, online process comprehension, and personal traits. He further argues that the foundations of online pedagogy and instruction should be understood by effective online instructors. They need to apply a wide range of concepts and techniques to show that they are competent in offering online instruction. Badiozaman and Segar (2022) claim that online instruction competency necessitates a different pedagogy and set of abilities than traditional classroom instruction.

The need for online instruction has grown due to COVID-19-related socioeconomic situations as well as technology advancements. For online instruction to be successful, lecturers must possess certain technological competencies. Numerous categories make up online

## CHAPTER 7

teaching competencies. Shank (2004) lists the following categories that can be found in the literature: technology/technical skills, online communication skills, pedagogical knowledge, teaching methods and strategies, online education and content; field expertise, personal characteristics, process management and facilitation, planning and preparation, course management, and evaluation. Lecturers need to be experts in these areas to teach effectively online.

### 7.3 Purpose of the study

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The purpose of the study was to investigate first-year students' perceptions of the lecturer's online instruction competence. The move from face-to-face to online teaching and learning mode made students and lecturers uncomfortable with this new mode of teaching, especially in those institutions where online teaching and learning was not a requirement prior to Covid 19. The COVID-19 pandemic forced us to rapidly change our mode of teaching and learning. This was a new experience for lecturers and students alike; hence the researcher investigated the students' perceptions of lecturers' online instruction competence.

The researcher intended to establish how students, as the recipients, gauge lecturers' online instruction skills. Thus the research question posed was: What is the Intercultural Studies students' perception of their lecturer's online instruction competence? Though the sample was not representative of all the instructors, the responses can contribute to the mapping of future online instructional strategies.

### 7.4 Conceptual underpinning

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The researcher applied a student-centred strategy and encouraged students to be actively involved in their learning and decision-making. It

is the view of the researcher that the strategy must be student-centred, and that students must be encouraged to be actively involved in their learning and decision-making. The lecturer will play the role of a facilitator and challenge students to use their abilities to learn. With the student-centred strategy, students have total control over what and how they learn. This strategy encourages the students to take responsibility for their learning. The researcher is of the view that if this strategy is applied correctly in the teaching and learning environment, students will be motivated and they will have the willingness to learn.

O'Dell and Sulastri (2019) highlight that the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a person's intention to use technology influenced by two factors: perceived usefulness, which measures how much a person believes using technology will improve performance, and perceived ease of use, which measures how much a person believes using technology will make finishing tasks easier. The author opted for TAM because it is the model that predicts the acceptance of computer applications. It must also be noted that at this university of technology's participants were not used to online instruction and assessment. Facilities were provided to participants which were first-year students by the time the evaluation was conducted, and they did not struggle to use the computer facilities provided to them.

The Technology Adoption Model (TAM) propounded by Davis (1989) underpins the current study. Electronic learning, often known as e-learning, is becoming more common in many higher educational institutions. A large body of research on technology adoption has sought to discover, forecast, and describe the factors that influence how individuals and organizations accept and use technological breakthroughs (Dube *et al.*, 2020). Technology adoption, as described by Khasawneh (2008), is the initial use or acceptance of a new technology or system. Related theories and models of the TAM: the

theory of reasoned action (TRA), the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), the technology-organization-environment (TOE), and the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT), help to explain how people adopt new technologies. The current study seeks to determine students' perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and instructor attitude toward the use of online platforms for learning as these are the indicators of Davis' (1989) TAM model. The respondents' views are based on the instructor's digital competence.

### 7.5 Methodology

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The study sought to assess the depth and breadth of lecturers' online teaching proficiency from the viewpoint of their students. 47 first-year university of technology students studying Intercultural Studies were given an online survey questionnaire with a view to conduct the study. Participants were informed via email by the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT). In the context of this study the researcher used an online survey questionnaire which consisted of qualitative and quantitative paradigm in investigating first-year students' perceptions of the lecturer's online instruction competence. The online survey combined the two research paradigms so that students' diverse viewpoints could cast light on this study. The instrument which was used to collect data consisted of section A, which consisted of multiple-choice questions and section B, which consisted of open-ended short questions. These ensured that the researcher gained a bigger picture of students' perceptions of the lecturer's online instruction competence. The use of quantitative research methods in the study enabled the researcher to obtain a sound data analysis which was done using six-point Likert scale; hence valid and reliable results were obtained at the end of the research journey. The use of qualitative methods in the study assisted the researcher in understanding the human behaviour and

feelings of the students towards the lecturer's online competency. Notably, only a maximum of 27 out of the 47 students responded to each item in section B, which is qualitative. If the same students managed to complete Section A, it could be surmised that the students were reluctant to complete this section because it required some thought. This distorted a clear grasp of the entire group's sentiments. However, the responses captured provided crucial information that can contribute to the future of online instruction. The participants in this study were 47 first-year students studying Intercultural Studies and who are the internet users.

The researcher used an existing questionnaire which was designed by CILT. This questionnaire was distributed online by CILT so that students could give feedback on the lecturer's online competency. It must be noted that the researcher is the lecturer who was evaluated by the students, and he was not part of the evaluation process. Post the evaluation of the lecturer the report was sent to the lecturer by CILT. It is worth noting that the researcher requested permission to use the results before the conceptualisation of this paper, and permission was granted by CILT. The author applied for ethical clearance from the Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Approval. With a view to collect data for this study, questionnaires were distributed online for ease of access to participants. It must be admitted that this method has a disadvantage of low response rate.

The findings cannot be generalised because they are based on the case of one lecturer. However, the researcher believes that these findings can provide important indications of online teaching skills by lecturers that can be used to rethink learning models, tailor-make online instruction training needs for lecturers and map the future of online instruction. Students, as end users, are in the best position to give feedback on their online learning experiences based on the instructor's competence.

## CHAPTER 7

Future studies should synthesise students' feedback on lecturers' competence in online instruction to gain a more holistic determination of lecturers' readiness for online instruction and training needs according to their demographics. The goal of the qualitative method is to ascertain how individuals understand a phenomenon (Valsaraj, 2021). This method includes an inductive analysis of the data to establish recurring themes, patterns, or ideas, followed by an explanation and interpretation of those categories (Nassaji, 2015). To understand the comments better provided by students regarding the lecturer's competence in online instruction, a qualitative research method is the most appropriate for this particular study. Through the eyes of study participants, qualitative research aims to explore the inner realm of perception and comprehend, characterize, and explain social processes. As opposed to generalisability, qualitative researchers often refer to "transferability" (from context to context). Considering the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences for abruptly shifting teaching and learning to an online platform, this study aims to comprehend the students' feedback when it comes to lecturer's online instruction competency. Fitria (2021) supports the above statement by saying qualitative research does not use statistics and numbers as part of its scientific gear; statistical tools are not used in qualitative research.

### 7.6 Findings

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The quantitative and qualitative findings are presented and analysed separately, then corroborated to determine a holistic perspective of students' online learning experiences based on the lecturer's competence. The quantitative findings are presented in Section A and the qualitative findings in Section B.

### 7.6.1. Section A: Students' quantitative responses based on a six-point Likert scale

The quantitative responses are based on a six-point Likert scale with the following descriptive labels: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neither Agree nor Disagree (NAD), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD), Average (AV). This will gauge in quantitative terms and average frequencies, the extent of student satisfaction with online instruction. All 47 students responded to items in this section. Before moving on, let's take a quick look at a few Likert scale constructional diversities. According to Joshi, Kale, Chandel and Pal (2015) the analytical handling and interpretation of Likert scales depend heavily on constructional diversities. Comparing symmetric and asymmetric Likert scale: This gives participants the freedom to select any response in a symmetric and balanced manner in either direction if the neutral/neutral position is precisely between the two extremes of strongly disagree (SD) and strongly agree (SA)

**Table 7.1: Students' responses to the lecturer's online instruction competence**

| QN | Descriptive code                          | Response code |      |     |     |    |    |
|----|-------------------------------------------|---------------|------|-----|-----|----|----|
|    |                                           | SA            | A    | NAD | D   | SD | AV |
| 1  | Lecturer available for online instruction | 72.3          | 23.4 | 2.2 | 0   | 0  | 48 |
| 2  | Necessary online materials made available | 53.3          | 38.3 | 0   | 0   | 0  | 46 |
| 3  | Materials are interactive and interesting | 60            | 32   | 4.3 | 0   | 0  | 46 |
| 4  | Additional material is provided           | 40.4          | 40.4 | 15  | 0   | 0  | 40 |
| 5  | Effective communication of changes        | 68.1          | 26   | 2.1 | 0   | 0  | 47 |
| 6  | Flexible submission dates and platforms   | 60            | 23.4 | 9   | 4.3 | 0  | 42 |
| 7  | The content accessible on e-Thuto         | 38.3          | 45   | 9   | 4.3 | 0  | 42 |

## CHAPTER 7

|    |                                                  |      |      |      |     |   |    |
|----|--------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|-----|---|----|
| 8  | The lecturer is always prepared for class        | 55.3 | 36.2 | 2.1  | 0   | 0 | 46 |
| 9  | Class sessions are properly organised            | 38.3 | 49   | 6.4  | 0   | 0 | 44 |
| 10 | Assessment requirements are indicated            | 49   | 40.4 | 4.2  | 0   | 0 | 45 |
| 11 | The lecturer motivates my interest in the course | 38.3 | 38.3 | 4.3  | 6.4 | 0 | 38 |
| 12 | The lecturer encourages question-asking          | 55.3 | 28   | 6.4  | 0   | 0 | 42 |
| 13 | Opportunities for participation are given        | 47   | 36.2 | 9    | 0   | 0 | 42 |
| 14 | The lecturer shows enthusiasm in the course      | 64   | 26   | 2.1  | 0   | 0 | 45 |
| 15 | Independent thinking is encouraged               | 47   | 34   | 9    | 2.1 | 0 | 41 |
| 16 | The lecturer is open to diverse viewpoints       | 49   | 26   | 15   | 2.1 | 0 | 38 |
| 17 | Useful, constructive feedback is provided        | 31.2 | 28   | 19.2 | 3   | 0 | 30 |
| 18 | Feedback on students' work is provided timely    | 36.2 | 43   | 11   | 2.1 | 0 | 40 |
| 19 | The lecturer is willing to offer help            | 43   | 40.4 | 9    | 0   | 0 | 42 |
| 20 | The lecturer is sensitive and concerned          | 32   | 43   | 15   | 0   | 0 | 38 |
| 21 | The lecturer encourages high-quality work        | 53.2 | 30   | 6.4  | 0   | 0 | 42 |
| 22 | The lecturer provides clear explanations         | 45   | 38.3 | 6.4  | 0   | 0 | 42 |

### 7.6.2. Section B: Students' qualitative responses based on narrative themes

The qualitative responses were based on open-ended brief answers to narrative codes about students' experiences of online learning. Some outstanding responses are quoted verbatim.

### **Comment on the lecturer's remote teaching**

Twenty-seven out of 47 students responded. All 27 (100%) responses indicated that the lecturer's online remote teaching is effective. One student commented: 'The lecturer is always available in case the students need extra assistance. He announces on time when something gets posted on e-Thuto. He makes sure to explain all the work posted on e-Thuto.' Another student says, 'He has made remote learning a bit easier by not just giving out tasks but explaining the work with the use of recordings and providing materials such as slides, which provide the necessary information that is summarised.'

### **Comment on the lecturer's teaching management**

Twenty-seven out of 47 students responded. All 27 (100%) responses confirmed that the lecturer's teaching management is diligent: from planning and preparation to execution. One student confirmed:

*The lecturer managed his teaching quite well; everything was always ready when it was time for class.*

Another one commented:

*The lecturer is always on time on the days when we are supposed to have lessons. He gives us enough time to complete assignments and understanding to students who have trouble submitting due to connectivity issues.*

### **Comment on the lecturer's student engagement**

Twenty-six out of 47 students responded. All 26 (100%) responses were in consensus that the lecturer's engagement is commendable and above average.

One student said:

## CHAPTER 7

*In class and online, he doesn't only lecture us and that's it. We all talk, we all express our opinions, and he listens.*

One student remarked:

*The lecturer is always available to ensure that he is connected with his students and that they engage with the content and are on track. He provides feedback to students to let us know how we are doing. Should a student be left behind, the lecturer always reaches out to me either privately or through fellow students to ensure they catch up.*

### **Comment on the lecturer's support of student learning.**

Twenty-one out of 47 students responded. All 21 (100%) respondents agreed that the lecturer has done the best in supporting learners with materials and using channels he knows are best for them.

One student indicated:

*The lecturer is always available to answer any questions regarding the course work or assignments. He also provides extra study material for a student who is struggling with their work.*

Another student remarked:

*The lecturer sets a period of when he will be available to respond promptly to students' needs when he issues out an assignment or whatever task that is academically related. He keeps using tools he knows works best for his students and himself.*

### **What did the lecturer do to improve your learning?**

Twenty-three out of 47 students responded. All 23 (100%) responses concurred that the lecturer used various methods to improve their learning such as voice notes, slides, real-life examples, asking questions, giving challenging assignments, active group chats, pushing students, giving students reminders, and giving extra materials.

One student had this to say:

*He keeps the work simple with clear instructions such as when he expects our tasks to be done and handed in. This has helped with eliminating procrastination. The work is much easier to understand, not always but most of the time.*

Another student said:

*He posted extra study material on e-Thuto, so if I didn't understand something I always had extra material to refer to.*

### **What recommendations do you have for this lecturer to improve their teaching?**

Twenty-six out of 47 students responded. The following are the recommendations given, quoted verbatim:

*I would like our lecturer to open channels for students to help him with a few things in the form of SI the students can interact with other students to iron out matters which the lecturer may have not reached in the student's perspective.*

*To make remote learning more interactive, where we get opportunities to not just listen or read, but to actively process the information given in terms of quizzes and get immediate results. I believe this will help us absorb and remember the material easier.*

*The lecture must engage more with us in terms of how we have worked in a certain semester and in how we can put improvement into our work and into understanding what is being taught.*

*We would like to get feedback about how we wrote. And a clear indication of things we got wrong on tests.*

*Must allow students to express themselves more often.*

*Maybe get proper books or slides that are not full of words we can't even read properly.*

*But never put students in awkward positions whereby students will be afraid of attending their lessons... they must go easy on us.*

*Continue to be supportive to your students but not overwhelm them.*

### 7.7 Discussion and corroboration of findings

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The findings that emerged from this study are organized about existing literature and real-world experiences, especially when compared to the achievements of competency in online training. One of the main goals of the study is to show how important it is for University of Technology lecturers to be proficient in online instruction. It is intended that this study will spark ideas for additional investigation, discussion, and action toward pertinent and concrete advancements in the area of online instruction competency. The two TAM categories of perceived ease of use (PEOU) and perceived usefulness (PU) were used to discuss the findings. Perceived ease of use was discussed with reference to the lecturer's remote teaching and lecturer's teaching management. Under the category of Perceived Usefulness, findings were presented with reference to the lecturer's availability for online instruction and necessary online material being made available. The findings of this study support the Technology Acceptance Model's (TAM) Perceived Usefulness (PU) principle, showing that the degree to which technology was viewed as relevant and helpful in lecturers to be proficient in online instruction process determined how widely it was accepted by first-year students at the university of technology under investigation. According to Hoong, Thi and Lin (2017), perceived usefulness (PU) is defined as people's belief that using a particular tool will enhance their performance and, as such, "is the key determinant that emphatically influences users'

convictions and expectation to utilize the innovation.” Concerning the perceived usefulness, the lecturer’s availability for online instruction and online material being made available, the students cited that the lecturer was always available for remote teaching and the material provided was extremely useful. The degree to which a potential user believes an intervention or system to be effortless to use is known as perceived ease of use (PEOU) (Surendran, 2012). Concerning the perceived usefulness the lecturer’s availability for online instruction and online material being made available, the students cited that the lecturer was always available for remote teaching and that the material provided was extremely useful. Some studies have identified issues such as lack of lecturer preparation for online learning, constraints on learning facilities that are not fully ready and complete for students and technical obstacles such as the internet network that many students complain about during online learning (Kemp, Palmer & Strelan, 2019).

The responses are discussed in three categories of themes discovered in the data. The quantitative responses are significant in only two of the six-point Likert scale, SA and A; therefore the other scale weightings are ignored. The first category is planning and preparation. The lecturer’s availability for online instruction is significant (72.3% SA, 23.4% A), and so is the availability of necessary materials online (53.3% SA, 38.3%). The fact that some students agree, but not strongly, could be attributed to the fact that sometimes students receive the materials late due to connectivity issues. The consensus that materials are interactive and interesting is significant (60% SA, 32%). Perhaps this is an indication that there is still room for improvement.

These findings corroborate the responses from item 1 of the qualitative findings, confirming that the lecturer’s remote teaching is effective, and elaborating that the lecturer announces, posts, explains and summarises information timely and clearly. This finding reinforces

## CHAPTER 7

Yuhanna *et al.*'s (2020) assertion that materials that improve the program or course as a whole are available, such as emails for simple communication, and numerous software programs (such as WebCT and Black Board) that give lecturers and students simple access to educational materials and tools for effective online learning. In line with the current findings, Ametova and Mustafoeva's (2020) study indicates that 77% of lecturers at American and other foreign universities think that traditional education is sometimes surpassed by online education in terms of quality, and this could be the motivation for its wider adoption.

As to whether additional material is provided (40.4% SA, 40% A). These responses are fair, implying that more could be done to provide additional materials. A significant percentage of the responses (68.1% SA, 26% A) confirmed adequate communication of changes. Respondents confirmed that there are flexible submission dates and platforms (60% SA, 23.4% A). The finding on time flexibility is confirmed in item 2 of the qualitative findings, indicating that the lecturer considers students' challenges that delay submission. Krishnapatria (2020) points out that not every student in the class has access to equipment or technology tools such as laptops, desktop computers, and/or mobile phones that allow online learning.

However, it should be commended that at the institution of the current study, efforts were made to provide students with the necessary technological gadgets to enable online learning. The researcher's observation in this regard is that this purported lack of access to online instruction could be viewed as a manipulative tendency by some students considering their ongoing protests during the time of data collection. Nonetheless, to keep this online learning process running smoothly, lecturers and institutions must consider the relevance of student perception as a factor (Allo, 2020).

Content accessibility on e-Thuto and data flexibility was confirmed by (38% SA, and 45% A). This was a fair frequency. It could be surmised that connectivity issues and student protests delayed student access to learning materials. However, the respondents acknowledged that the lecturer provides materials using other channels than e-Thuto. Perhaps, students need more training to navigate e-Thuto, which is the institution's official learning management system.

The voices on whether the lecturer is always prepared for the class showed some slight reservations as well, with (55.3% SA) and (36.2% A). As already alluded to, this could have been a result of the general unrest of students going on in the study setting during the time of data collection. This contradicts the qualitative finding, in which most of the respondents indicated that the lecturer is very well prepared all the time, as in items 3 and 4 that asked them to comment on student engagement and learner support. The respondents confirmed that the lecturer actively engages the learners and allows them to voice their opinions and that the lecturer supports learners by providing extra materials and being there for them all the time. Perhaps Daniel's (2020) claims that the COVID-19 epidemic has affected students' lives in a variety of ways, based on their level and course of study as well as where they are in their programs could help explain the foregoing contradiction. Mafugu and Abel (2021) assert that lecturers should actively contribute to the construction of the reality of online instruction, and this can be possible through positive attitudes as noted in the current findings.

The second category is content delivery. The responses on whether class sessions are properly organised were not significant (38.3% SA) and (49% A). It could be surmised that the disturbances at the institution could have played a role, but there is room for improvement. There is a notable consensus that assessment requirements are indicated, with

## CHAPTER 7

(49% SA) and (40.4% A). On whether the lecturer motivates the student's interest in the content delivery, the frequencies were not that significant (38.3% SA) and (38.3% A). This could imply that more skills are required to make online learning more effective. As to whether the lecturer encouraged question asking, the responses were significant only to some extent (55.3% SA) and (28% A), implying that more could be done in that regard as well. Similarly, regarding the statement on whether opportunities for participation are given, the voices were significant to a certain extent (47% SA) and (36.2 % A).

It could be surmised that learners would have wanted to participate more than currently. The frequency of whether the lecturer showed enthusiasm in the module was significant (64% SA) and (26% A). However, the respondents' voices are not noticeably confident that independent thinking is encouraged (47% SA) and (34% A). Notably, much online education has relied on instructors distributing reading materials to students via email or putting information on Google Classroom, Moodle, or other learning management systems (Pete & Soko, 2020) and this limits interaction and feedback.

The quantitative frequencies are not in harmony with the qualitative responses given in item 3 in which they were required to comment on the lecturer's student engagement and all the respondents concurred that the lecturer is delivering the content exceptionally well. Importantly, it is commended that students are satisfied with content delivery in this module though there could be some areas for improvement.

On the contrary, in some contexts, research indicates that lecturers were unable to assist students with the necessary abilities to access the online learning platforms since there was no direct personal interaction and some lacked practical knowledge of digital technologies (Adnan & Anwar, 2020). Less digitally competent lecturers and instructors were

consequently ill-prepared and/or under-equipped to handle complex computer and internet-related responsibilities. Mthethwa and Luthuli (2021) claim that academic personnel had difficulties because they lacked adequate training to use internet resources. Notably, in the current study context, training opportunities are adequate for learning instructors to handle online instruction.

The third category is student support from the lecturer. The frequency of whether the lecturer is open to diverse viewpoints is significant to some extent (49% SA) and (26% A). Perhaps the learners need to be given more opportunities to discuss their course. Regarding useful constructive feedback being provided (31.2% SA) and (38%). The slightly low frequencies could be because students might be having some reservations regarding the feedback they get. Concerning feedback on student work being provided timely, the frequencies were fair (36.2% SA) and (43% A). If there were some delays, they could have been caused by deferring assignment schedules and due dates made by the institution which made it difficult to stick to original schedules. Concerning the lecturer's willingness to offer help (43% SA and (40.4 % A) and are significant slightly. It implies that there is more room to support the students. The respondents' voices were not noticeably confident whether the lecturer was sensitive and concerned (32% SA) and (43% A). Because students could not attend all the sessions due to the general unrest during the data collection, it might have been difficult for them to evaluate this affective variable. The frequency of whether the lecturer encourages high-quality work was significant (53.2 SA) and (30% A). However, these frequencies are an indication that more can be done to improve the quality of work. Regarding whether the lecturer provides clear explanations (45% SA) and (38.3% A). This fair frequency points to the fact that explanations can be made clearer.

## CHAPTER 7

The quantitative responses are not in tandem with item 4 of Section B in which they commented on the lecturer's support of student learning, as well as in item 5 in which they commented on what the lecturer did to improve the student's learning. In both these items, the respondents confirmed that the lecturer was doing exceptionally well. Largely, these findings showing general satisfaction with online platforms disagree with other findings such as that by Raaper and Brown (2020) who note that students experienced considerable problems with routine and self-discipline, mental and physical welfare, study motivation, and feelings of loneliness as a result of the physical and social environment of universities disintegrating. However, it should be acknowledged that only 13% of the 47 students responded to Section B. Nonetheless, these voices should be used to map the future of instruction models. Hence Burns *et al.* (2020) state that it is crucial to introduce new and modified approaches to help students in their academic path post-COVID-19 better.

### 7.8 Conclusion

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The researcher concludes that generally, students are satisfied with the lecturer's competence in online instruction in the module evaluated. However, the findings reveal that there is more room for improvement in areas such as content delivery and student support as well as the general approach to online instruction. These findings boost confidence in migrating to online and blended learning platforms in the future. The fourth industrial and education revolutions call for digital skills and it is time for higher education institutions to develop economies such as South Africa, as the training hubs, to systematise and standardise online instruction.

## 7.9 Mapping the future

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The recommendations are drawn on item 6 of Section B (qualitative findings) in which students were requested to indicate how they expect the lecturer to improve on online instruction. It was recommended that extra help be enlisted from Supplemental Instruction leaders, senior students who can interact with other students to iron out matters which might not have been clear from the student's perspective. From the respondents' viewpoint, remote learning can be more interactive, by going beyond listening and reading, for example, to actively processing the information given in the form of online quizzes as this is believed to enhance absorbing and remembering learning content easier. Recapping and reflecting on previous work were other recommendations given to understand concepts and improve their learning. The respondents voiced that they need feedback on their performance and a clear indication of the content they got wrong in assessments. Another indication was that students must be allowed to express themselves more often. Acquiring proper books and providing slides that are simplified is another concern recommended. The respondents also indicated that they need to be supported and not overwhelmed. This implies more training and clear policies on online instruction as well as systematisation and standardisation of online instruction.

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## CHAPTER 7

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