

Curriculum delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic: Implications for remote tutoring and learning

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed challenges within traditional instructional approaches in various learning contexts, highlighting a greater need for curriculum transformation. With the disruption of face-to-face instruction, remote teaching, learning, and tutoring are proving to be pedagogic solutions for engaging with students to ensure the continuation of successful teaching and learning. Therefore, it is important that virtual experiences align with the curriculum and instructional approaches. This investigation aimed at exploring how tutors can introduce remote learning and tutoring in an undergraduate module in the Faculty of Education at the University of Johannesburg (UJ). We also wanted to examine tutors' ability to motivate students to use their mobile devices for study purposes during formal tutorials. A qualitative exploratory inquiry determined how mobile devices could support remote teaching and learning and tutoring. Through an in-depth literature review, focus group interviews with five tutors, and questionnaires answered by approximately 400 second-year students, data was collected. Challenges that were identified the additional hours required by lecturers and tutors to deliver much-needed support after hours and only students with the needed resources and access could benefit from the support, the digital divide was of concern. Successes identified linked to students' appreciation of the importance of implementing a tutoring system that fits the 21st century context. A tutoring system that is not only compliant with modern technological advancements but that it consistent with the global expectation to equip students with relevant skills. This investigation revealed that tutors could serve as catalysts for motivating students to use their devices for study purposes. The findings also revealed that there is a greater need for remote (virtual) tutoring that is student-centred for effective learning to occur, especially under remote learning conditions.

Keywords: COVID-19, remote tutoring, curriculum delivery.

1. Introduction

The unexpected implications of COVID-19 have forced higher education institutions to rethink and re-evaluate how teaching and learning should be adapted and conducted. Higher education institutions had to put their traditional teaching methods on hold and embrace Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) tools to ensure continuous teaching and learning. Universities had to adapt and explore various online teaching and learning platforms quickly. This included pre-recorded videos and PowerPoint lectures, WhatsApp group voice notes, videos and chat messaging, email, live and recorded BlackBoard collaborate sessions, text messaging, and formative assessments. Amid this dire situation, tutors incorporated several online platforms to support students during the uncertainty caused by Covid 19. The students' digital native nature and access to mobile devices created unique survival opportunities for higher education institutions to proceed with teaching and learning during the hard lockdown and social distancing protocols. It is important to note that for some students, the difficulties of learning from home have illuminated societal challenges – such as unsustainable inequalities, racial injustice, and the digital divide gap. Furthermore, there is much scrutiny around remote teaching and learning.

An exploratory investigation with 470 second-year Education students and five tutors was conducted at UJ's Faculty of Education. These students and tutors were purposefully selected and made up the non-probability sample. This inquiry aimed to understand the perceptions of tutors and students in respect of remote learning. Each tutor, including the assistant lecturer, was assigned to 78 students. The five tutors consisted of two females and three males aged between 20 to 40 years old. This large purposive sample was used to generate more robust results and greater significance from the data and facilitate more straightforward generalizations about the sample.

After an in-depth review of the literature, we conducted focus group interviews with tutors and requested that students complete a questionnaire. We hoped that the data would provide insights into tutors' remote interventions during COVID-19 and students' use of mobile devices in tutorial activities. We also anticipated that this inquiry would provide us with more nuanced insight into aspects of the tutorial system at UJ.

We assume that curriculum delivery during the lockdown period can be achieved if we have a nuanced understanding of remote learning and recognise a greater need for remotely tutoring by following a remote student-centred approach alongside a technology-based pedagogy. The successful implementation and adaptation of these new norms within the higher education context allows for the continuation of teaching and learning and prepares tutors and students for pandemics that might strike in the future, with the associated unexpected challenges.

To this end, we aimed to explore the ability of tutors to teach successfully and act as mediators through remote tutoring and learning. We sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do tutors navigate learning in remote tutoring contexts?
2. What are the students' and tutors' perceptions of remote tutoring and learning?

We set out to achieve the following objectives:

1. To explore the perceptions of tutors and their experiences of navigating remote tutoring and learning; and
2. To examine the perceptions of students and tutors of remote tutoring and learning.

The impact of COVID-19 on education and training in institutions of higher learning

The COVID-19 pandemic illuminated the challenges within the traditional instructional approaches and highlighted a great need for curriculum transformation in higher education institutions. It became evident that with the pandemic came a sense of unpreparedness, as we were primarily reliant on traditional teaching methods. Many of the challenges identified were embedded within the face-to-face activities and the associated learning outcomes (Sahu, 2020). During the lockdown, we became acutely aware that face-to-face instruction is no longer the only primary mechanism for conducting and creating successful teaching and learning environments. Therefore, education and training in higher education institutions need to be re-aligned and reimagined to avoid further chaos, especially during uncertain times.

According to Wangenge-Ouma and Kupe (2020, p. 7), "for universities to secure long-term success and vitality, they must adjust to their organizational environment changes." The long-term and short-term effects, changes, and challenges need to be carefully considered with innovative responses and strategic considerations to avoid turbulence and instability.

Past unrest experienced at universities, such as student protests, was primarily a result of uncertainty. Such uncertainty leads to anxiety and stress, which may negatively affect performance (Cameron, Kim & Whetten, 1987). COVID-19 has thus brought with it the likelihood of turbulence, but higher education institutions are forced to continue the academic year to ensure effective teaching and learning still occurs.

Teaching and learning remotely

The question that all higher education institutions have been asking since the outbreak of COVID-19 is: How do we continue teaching and learning while facing the threat of a lockdown? According to Huang et al. (2020, p. 16):

"Governments and education providers need to further promote the construction of the educational information, considering equipping educators and students with standardized home-based teaching and learning equipment, conduct online training, and support academic research into online education, especially education to help students with online learning difficulties."

Considering various changes, risks, and suggestions, higher education institutions in South Africa have adopted and implemented remote teaching, learning, and tutoring to survive the storm.

Remote teaching and learning brings an element of contact within a distance-learning context and ultimately makes a physical contactless experience less contactless as the virtual presence becomes more meaningful. During the pandemic, teaching and learning remotely, was evident in higher education institutions and will remain relevant post-COVID-19. To ensure the continuation of successful teaching and learning, an alignment of these contactless, remote teaching and learning experiences with curriculum and instructional approaches is required.

The transition from the traditional face-to-face methods to online remote methods and the continuation thereof calls for the adaptation and transitioning to a relevant technology-based pedagogy that informs curriculum delivery. This transition filters through the teaching, learning, and tutoring processes within the remote teaching and learning context.

The shift to “remote” learning and tutoring

The terms “online” and “remote” are used interchangeably – but according to Hodges et al. (2020), online teaching, learning, and tutoring are embedded in educational software that provides educational support.

Higher education intuitions rely on the learning management systems (LMS) primarily to communicate online with students – such as MOOCs and BlackBoard – where content can be personalised, with a focus on the specific needs of the student(s). On the other hand, remote teaching, learning, and tutoring are aligned with active screen sharing between an educator/tutor and the student(s)/tutee(s). It can be done through remote channels such as Zoom, Skype, MS Teams, and BlackBoard Collaborate as well as through social media applications such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and WhatsApp.

Tutoring amid COVID-19

Tutors too needed to be relevant by adapting to innovative ways of tutoring because of the disruptions brought about by COVID-19. Previously, as indicated in Figure 1 below, the UJ's tutor system was primarily focused on traditional face-to-face tutoring in one-on-one consultations and group tutorials.

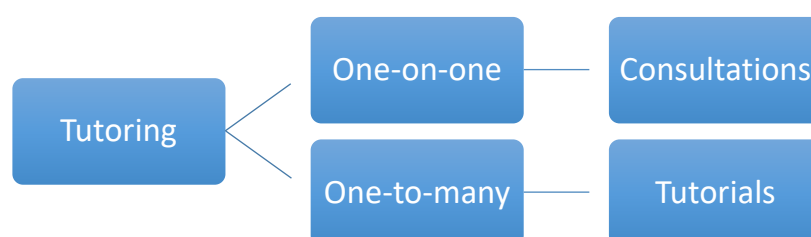


Figure 1 - Traditional tutoring system (Source: Robertson, 2019)

Remote learning brought a sense of urgency as an immediate remedy for the current dilemma and threat to the continuation of education. Tutors now replaced the traditional tutoring model depicted in Figure 1 with one-on-one emails and group tutorials via a learning management system, BlackBoard. Tutors are at the frontline since students see them as the "first port of call," Ultimately, they steer the teaching and learning environment in various directions. According to a report published by the UJ (2020), the institution's tutors have become "e-tutors" overnight and provide invaluable support to students.

A "remote" student-centered approach

The anxiety and uncertainty within the current context call for additional support, guidance, and clarity for students. A "remote" student-centred approach gives students clarity in the face of a sudden change of environment and procedures to avoid turbulence and chaos for an institution. Our firm belief is that successful and continuous teaching and learning during the current lockdown period is dependent on tutors. A remotely considered student-centred approach is emphasised within the remote tutor system as a vital tool to manage a potential turbulence trigger for the UJ. The university negotiated zero-rated data support between midnight and 05h00 to facilitate online learning. However, this was problematic for some students, who could only access online information through WhatsApp during the day and BlackBoard from midnight. Tutors bridge this gap by offering student-centered approaches that exceed the traditional tutor appointed times.

Challenges faced when teaching and learning remotely.

Universities in South Africa considered the data implications and granted zero-rated support to access the learning management system, Black Board. A challenge identified by the UJ was that the data made available through a "night owl" provisioning, which is between midnight and 05h00, limited optimal use by students. As a result, they could only access online information through WhatsApp during the day and on the online learning platform, BlackBoard late in the evenings. This meant that the lecture and tutorial content could be pre-recorded and was accessible for longer, but lecturers and tutors had to deliver much-needed support after hours. Even in this regard, the digital divide was of concern. The socioeconomic and location-based digital divides in South Africa are evident (Robertson, 2019). Making devices available to vulnerable students was necessary to save the academic year and address the digital divide gap (University of Johannesburg, 2020).

Furthermore, this uncertainty created confusion and anxiety among students. They feared that their studies would be compromised. They were also worried that COVID-19 might determine how soon they would be able to complete their studies. Other aspects that they were anxious about are the financial impact of COVID-19, the increasing infection rates, the effect that isolation would have on their studies and safety concerns for family members – they also contended with feelings of depression. Amid these concerns and fears, students appreciated the importance of implementing a tutoring system in the 21st century. One that would not only be compliant with modern technological advancements and consistent with the global expectation to

equip students with skills (Robertson, 2019). Also, to ensure that a robust online presence from tutors to represent the institution through a remote student-centred approach was implemented to support them during times of uncertainty.

A pedagogy associated with remote learning will differ from the traditional pedagogical approach. The transition from traditional face-to-face and online teaching and learning methods to remote methods calls for adaptation and transitioning to a technology-based pedagogy that is suitable and informs curriculum delivery. The transition filters through the teaching, learning, and tutoring processes within remote teaching and learning contexts. It integrates learning strategies such as collaborative learning, bring-your-device, and learning-by-doing. These processes are further aligned with the theoretical lenses used in this investigation.

Theoretical framework

We used the concept of Communities of Practice theory (CoP) as proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991) as the theoretical framework to explain the tutoring process and examine the design of context-aware functions that are necessary for remote learning. CoPs are formed when individuals come together for a common interest, regularly interacting while focusing on a shared problem and learning from each other (Wenger, 1998). The same interests and similarities, dialogue, and group learning create opportunities for collaboration, provide individuals with opportunities for problem-solving, and strengthen the formed communities of practice. We took a deeper look at the CoP from a virtual perspective to fully comprehend the remote tutoring and learning context. We used the virtual communities of practice lens and focused on a professional community, who, in this case, were the students.

Virtual Professional Communities of Practice

The concept Virtual Professional Communities of Practice (VPCoP) is embedded in CoP, is based on information systems, and focuses on a professional field. Using information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) – such as the Internet, to support ongoing interactions, CoPs have become increasingly virtual (VPCoPs). This frees their members from the limitations of time and space. Secondly, CoPs, according to Wenger (1998), are small, tight-knit groups involved in intensive and sustained interactions around a shared practice. Online and remote communities can quickly form large groups that do not align within tight-knit contexts. The ties among participants in large groups are almost non-existent and often anonymous collectives that cannot equal the strong relationships that characterise CoPs.

Secondly, a community is an environment where members share knowledge and collaborate through information systems without geographical frontiers. The geographical distance diminishes as information and communication technologies bring individuals together and bridge spatial and cultural divides (Nistor et al., 2013). A new culture has emerged in teaching and learning, more explicitly so now, because of COVID-19. For the successful sharing of knowledge within a CoP, all members need to contribute by engaging in activities such as posting questions on discussion boards,

sending voice notes, engaging in live chats, and sharing videos and publishing content.

Critical features of CoP virtual tutorials

The CoP characteristics involve “a shared domain of interest (the domain), engagement in mutual learning and knowledge sharing (the community), and shared inventory of resources (information for the practice)” (Wang & Ma, 2017, p. 21).

A shared domain of interest

The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated a shift for Teaching Studies 2 B (TST20B2) students from the face-to-face environment to a remote context. The tutorial discussions became their primary source of knowledge of the module.

Mutual learning and knowledge sharing

Learning remotely is embedded in Vygotsky's (1978) belief that the act of students collaborating in a remote context to construct new knowledge results in social cognition. Members of a VPCoP can support and challenge each other with shared knowledge and adequate and relevant knowledge construction. These are presented as the main dimensions – since the sustained engagement between groups of people will eventually create a CoP (Wenger, 1998). This would consist of members' practice-related interactions and collaboration to solve problems, develop valuable artifacts, and discuss relevant issues. The area of knowledge that brings members together gives them a distinct practitioner identity. It also identifies critical issues and problems they need to address.

Shared resources inventory

A shared inventory refers to the information shared. Students can share information, ideas, and viewpoints online (during live tutorial feeds) and offline (accessing audio PowerPoint slides or BlackBoard Collaborate recordings) in the remote learning-focused context. Engaging in discussions through the Internet and the WhatsApp forums on their mobile devices provides valuable tools for sharing information (Ali, 2017).

Experiences of members in a community

CoPs are informed by the authentic life experiences members bring to the learning spaces. The activity that members participate in, which results in learning within a CoP, is facilitated by the member's collective interactions and relationships with others (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 51). The shared experiences from both students and tutors strengthen the community.

Mediating tools

Mobile devices (smartphones, tablets, and laptops) enable students to learn remotely by exploring their world using technology. The VPCoP is formed through BlackBoard and WhatsApp and allows students to create VPCoP that supports conversations in remote learning environments. Tools and mediating artifacts include writing, reading, watching, and holding discussions.

Decision-makers

Members of the VPCoP are students and tutors. The role-players within the tutorial environment are tutors (senior tutors and tutors in general). The lecturer is at the top of the hierarchy – but has minimal influence in the interactions – since the focus is primarily on tutors as leaders of tutorials and critical players in remote learning. Leaders can support practice and rules. Tutors in this context are considered content experts, and through their experience, they can help both the practice and set rules. A tutor's life cycle ends when there is no longer a need to serve the community.

2. Methods

Participants

Through purposeful and complete sampling, the entire population of 470 undergraduate students registered for the Teaching Studies 2B module and five tutors was examined. Each tutor, including the assistant lecturer, was assigned to 78 students. The five tutors consisted of two females and three males aged between 20 to 40 years old. This large purposive sample was used to generate more robust results and greater significance from the data and facilitate more straightforward generalizations about the sample.

Design

Data collection instruments included focus group interviews with tutors and questionnaires administered and answered by 400 students. These students and tutors were purposefully selected and made up a non-probability sample. This inquiry aimed to understand the perceptions of tutors and students in respect of remote learning.

Materials

Data collection instruments included focus group interviews with tutors and questionnaires administered and answered by 400 students. This inquiry aimed to understand the perceptions of tutors and students in respect of remote learning during the Covid -19 pandemic.

Procedure

Through a qualitative explanatory case study, we examined tutorials and remote learning at a deeper level to provide insights into how students make meaning of their tutorial experiences, how they construct their worldviews, alongside the importance they attach to their experiences. This approach describes the occurrences found in the data that provide insights into students' behaviour in the tutorial setting and how this relates to remote learning at higher education institutions.

3. Data analysis and discussion of the findings

The findings identified through the focus group interviews and questionnaires gave way to recurrent themes such as the subject (the technology user/student), tools (remote learning technology), and object (knowledge and skills).

These elements are identified within a community, and then thematically analysed data suggest that tutors can successfully integrate a technology-based pedagogy when

the need arises. In the tutorial discussions, within the virtual spaces created through the BlackBoard Collaborate platforms (live video feeds, recording options, and text chat options), as well as the WhatsApp platform (shared video recordings, voice notes, and text messages), the tutors developed a range for dialogue and engagement. Common and shared interests were emphasised in the mix of Generation Z and Millennials. The recurring themes identified and further discussed are as follows: the convenience of mobile devices and bring-your-own-device, the tech-savvy student population, power struggles between tutors, and lack of attendance to tutorials and consultations.

The convenience of mobile devices

Tutors supported the convenience of having a learning tool in one's pocket. Mobile handheld devices such as mobile telephones, laptops, and tablet PC technologies have evolved. These devices have become smaller, lighter, and more convenient to carry with time, making them conducive to learning (Alsaadat, 2009). Tutors echo through their experience, the convenience of the mobile device, and its positive influence on the tutoring process. Tutoring in its traditional context is perceived as tutoring from the front of the lecture venue on a one-on many or one-on-one basis, as depicted in Figure 1 above.

Tutor 5 (said): In terms of my experience, we are expected to run weekly tutorials and consultations. That is what the job requires. The lecturers can change things here and there because of their expectations of the module, but its mode or less is the same. We will have assignment submissions and marking, etc. These are standard across modules. Some of the modules might have oral presentations as an assignment, and some might have written essays, but the tutor job or layout is basically the same.

The data revealed that the tutors had a sense of mobility with mobile devices during the tutoring activity.

Tutor 5 (commented): "I have access to the students while traveling."

Tutor 1 (elaborated): Our devices carry so much information and gives us access to applications and emails and essential data when and where we need it instantly.

From a student's perspective, having a device makes student life more manageable. From a tutor's perspective, having a device makes the job easier. Many students and all the tutors responded that they had a device that would make mobile learning approaches possible, including handheld computers and mobile telephones, and other devices that draw on the same set of functionalities (Traxler, 2007).

Bring-Your-Own-Device

The bring-your-own-device (BYOD) initiative supports remote learning and gives students access to tutorials – which has become a crucial element in continuing the academic year. Despite this advantage, 6 percent of the students still did not have personal devices for tutorial purposes because they did not own a device or it was lost, broken, or stolen.

One way of overcoming this hurdle was for the institution to keep to its promise and provide for the vulnerable students who did not have devices (University of Johannesburg, 2020). This was done to ensure equal continuation for all students and avoid turbulence (Cameron, Kim & Whetten, 1987; Wangenge-Ouma & Kupe, 2020).

Tech-savvy student population

The data also revealed that the students' demographics ranged from 78 percent Generation Z and 22 percent Millennials. Generation Z students born after 1995 constituted the majority of the sample (78%). The students born between 1980 and 1995, known as Millennials, were in the minority. These students share a common digital interest because they are digital natives and tech-savvy.

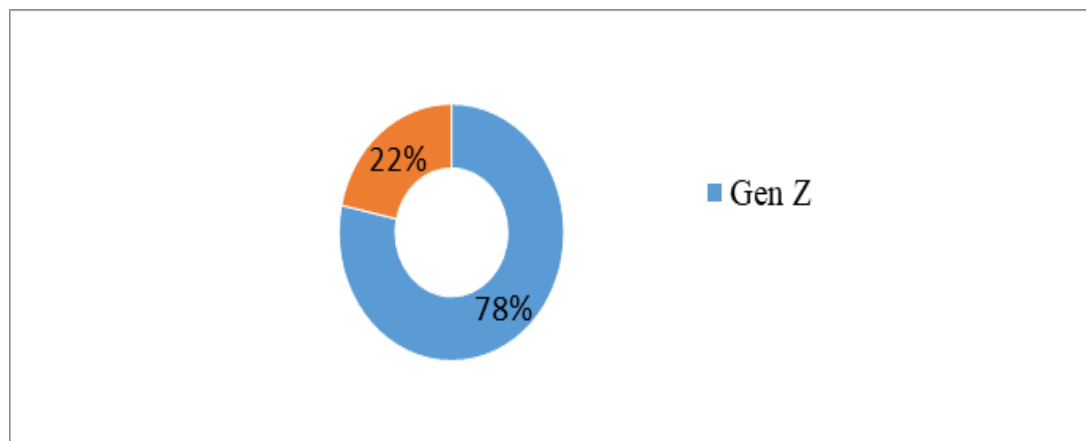


Figure 2 - The student population for the Teaching Studies 2 B module

The findings further revealed that the Millennials are phasing into the workplace and the minority represented in this study. Even though Gen Z students were in the majority in the online tutorials, both generations are techno-savvy and would comfortably be able to participate in mobile learning activities. The tutors also shared their year of birth during the focus group interview; they revealed they were generally peers to the students and had similar interests and learning needs.

Tutor 1: "I am a Millennial student," respectively.

Tutor 4 (responded): "I am Generation Z" and respectively.

The relevance of mobile devices for mobile learning was further emphasised since the general feeling of tutors portrayed that a change in the tutoring process was needed to improve tutoring.

Tutor 2 (responded): Changing how we tutor to fit our context and students' needs is impressive. It means that we are providing a service that is appreciated and needed. I am there because I have something to offer. If I cater to it so that they can value it, they will see my worth as a tutor. Mobile learning created that opportunity to package our service differently.

Both Generation Z and Millennials fill the tutorials, a mixed group, although they have different learning needs primarily driven and influenced by technology (Pearson, 2018). Ultimately, the goal of tutorials is for tutors to simplify concepts. If the students' learning needs are not met, the tutorial will be unsuccessful. Understanding the student demographic to consider their learning needs is crucial for this investigation.

Power struggles between tutors and students

Findings revealed that students' perceptions of tutors before the implementation of remote tutoring were that the tutors were not taken seriously. This was because they were regarded as peers with additional skills and training. Students did not appreciate a fellow student delivering content and often viewed the tutor as a peer. Still, the tutor's behaviour can be perceived or experienced as that of the lecturer. The tutor training widened this gap. Additional acquired skills gave the tutor, who may in one context, have been a peer to the students, now a level of superiority. It was evident that the power struggles between tutors and peers widened when tutors received tutor training.

Tutors did not have control over their tutorial spaces before the inclusion of mobile learning:

Tutor 2 (Commented): "It is the frustrating part of tutoring. When you stand in front of students talking to yourself".

Student 10 (Commented): "Tutorials are a waste of time; the tutor stands in front of the venue talking and has no idea if I am even listening... I guess it's the same in lectures too".

This imbalance is demonstrated in Figure 3 below. It was important for tutors to find a balance to reach the students and make learning more effective.

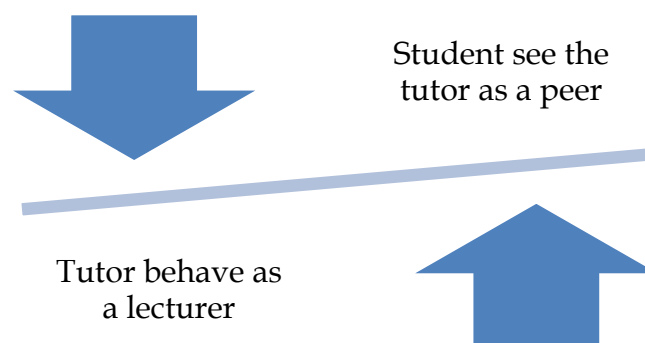


Figure 3 - Striking a balance between student and tutor relationships

In this investigation, the playing fields seemed to even after remote learning was introduced. Tutors assumed new tutor personas that considered them more like peers in support during the pandemic and continuity of learning, rather than tutors those fellow students are trying to control or act superior over. Besides, students embraced remote learning contributions because tutors introduced the concept from a peer tutor perspective – the mobile learning perspective allowed for successful remote tutoring. Tutors, too, became more approachable, accessible, and communicated easily as peers.

Lack of attendance at tutorials and consultations

The interviews and questionnaires revealed the lack of attendance before the implementation of mobile learning. The tutorial attendance, as well as consultations, fluctuated and were not productive when attendance was poor. Poor attendance was linked to the need for zero-rated data access and challenges identified regarding connectivity and access to devices.

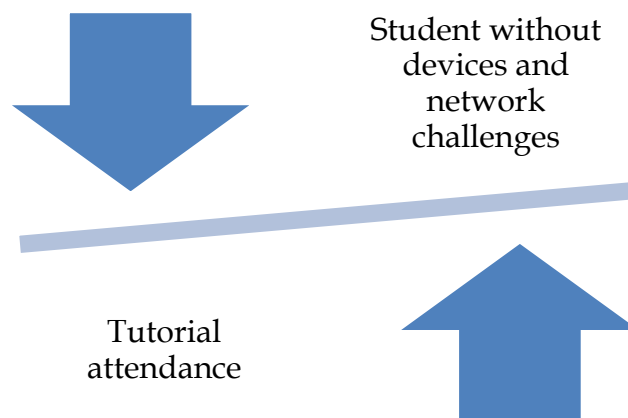


Figure 4 - Striking a balance between remote tutoring and learning space

The imbalance illustrated in Figure 4 relates to the push and pull factors within the remote learning and tutoring context that ultimately will affect teaching and assessment opportunities. We considered the two features of remote learning: (a) access to data and (b) access to a compatible device. It was found that students struggled to transition and remotely access the BlackBoard LMS during the day due to the evening zero-rated data granted. Students who needed devices had to contact the institution to obtain support and access to devices.

As some researchers have noted, mobile devices interact with our environments, and immobile objects respond to individuals constantly on the move (Krumm, 2018). Thus, these mobile devices enhanced the learning experiences of students but also became the object of learning. The implementation of remote learning opened a window into the virtual space for learning. Tutors incorporated online discussions amidst the scepticism. Thus, remote learning technologies have become catalysts in transmitting and conveying information. The results also revealed that students preferred an innovative approach to learning in the form of remote learning introduced in tutorials. Tutors appreciated the evident change in the tutorial environment and students' attitudes. Their inclusion via access to WhatsApp was considered. Although many are

questioning the quality of learning through WhatsApp, incorporating it as a discussion forum has proven useful (Ali, 2017). WhatsApp was both risky yet relevant. Therefore, for tutors, this was to their advantage. They could use this platform successfully to implement remote learning.

Using CoP as a lens revealed that the remote learning and tutoring approach brought about collaboration that resulted in meaningful and valuable tutorials in the virtual learning environment. Collaboration among students helped tutors overcome hurdles that were evident in the early stages of lockdown. These hurdles included uncertainty and anxiety because of COVID-19 and the related social distancing protocols, ineffective feedback, insufficient support, and ineffective tutorials. Students were no longer isolated and inactive during the continuation of remote learning. Lecturers and students worked together as a unit.

Sharing ideas using mobile devices was the basis for structuring and presenting tutorials. It seems reasonable to infer that tutors influenced and encouraged Virtual Communities of Practice (VCoP) since they had the ability and the interest to drive them and thus made learning possible. In the process, students' learning was deepened, fostering an authentic relationship with content. During lockdown and the related social distancing protocols, conversations, dialogue, and engagement could successfully continue to meet students' needs and pursue the institutions' goal to round off the academic year. It is evident from the investigation that new learning opportunities are dependent on technology-based pedagogies and a robust student-centred approach. The data revealed that tutors were successful facilitators and builders of communities around shared learning CoP in virtual spaces. Even with the uncertainty and under stressful conditions, tutors created an authentic learning experience. Lastly, the constant connectivity and wireless participation allowed students to participate from anywhere and at any time. This feeds into their "fear of missing out" (FOMO) principle and mitigates anxiety. The data revealed that FOMO is no longer an issue merely because students are invariably connected online.

To help tutors understand issues of discourse, we presented a model of remote learning within the classroom context. The model was adopted and is introduced as a contribution to this investigation. The aim was that tutors should become remote tutors, not only in a temporary sense but also in cases of crises or future pandemics, where they would serve as tools and continue to drive successful and meaningful VPCoP. In relation to both tables, the scores as they appear in both genders support the hypothesis tested. Males tend to score higher in 'justice', whereas females higher in 'care'.

A strategy and implementation model for remote tutoring

Figure 6 below shows that a student's first line of contact is the tutor. Students will continue to have consultation and tutorial access, but the only difference is that these will be conducted remotely. Students can have access to learning content and tutors through LMS, which is, in this case, the BlackBoard Collaborate platform. Further communication could be channelled through WhatsApp. One-on-one consultations

occur directly between tutor and tutee, using email or direct messaging and voice notes on WhatsApp. Group tutorials are conducted through BlackBoard collaboration sessions, and discussions are continued online through the BlackBoard online discussion threads. A change in the tutoring systems is depicted in the figure below.

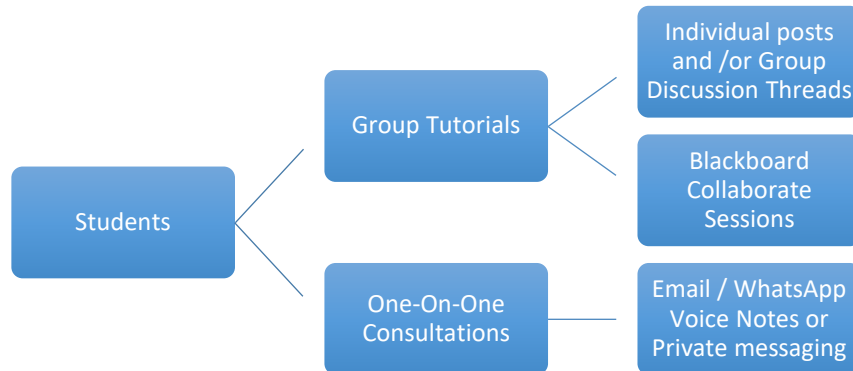


Figure 5 - Remote tutoring system

Examining the findings in the context of CoP revealed that tutors played a vital role in the successful implementation of remote learning and technology-based approaches. Remote learning, using WhatsApp and BlackBoard collaborate discussion forums, requires thorough planning and training to be successfully implemented. The WhatsApp platform was used as the basis for dialogue, where tutors-initiated discussions online by commenting instructions, riddles, videos, or questions to sustain, exhaust, or lead conversations with the students online.

The dialogue was encouraged through tutor support structures, with tutors encouraging students to respond to the activity initiated online. For remote learning to be implemented successfully during tutorials, planning and implementation should form the basis for the development of this model. Students were informed through an announcement from the institution leadership, faculty, and departments of the remote learning solution to ensure the continuation of lectures. Secure online behaviour was discussed to ensure that students did not comment nor post harmful content. Tutors had administrative rights to the WhatsApp and BlackBoard platforms and could report, block, and delete inappropriate comments and/remarks. After tutorials had been conducted, time was given to reflect on the positive aspects, but there were also evident tensions.

The results presented in this investigation reveal that there is a favourable growing interest in remote learning and that there is a need for a remote-conscious tutor. Tutors are mainly employed to assist lecturers in reiterating, clarifying concepts, and performing administrative duties (Robertson, 2019; Hussain, Sheng & Zhang, 2019). Thus, this investigation aimed to explore the ability of tutors to contribute more to learning during the pandemic and lockdown conditions. It was evident from the data that tutors are significant players in the success of remote learning. Furthermore, they play a crucial role in the frontline contact with students, peer relations, their interests, new

technologies, and the acceptance of remote learning. The implementation of remote learning-driven through a remote tutoring lens had to overcome several challenges that both students and tutors faced – even though the pandemic affected and changed the world and education context as we know it. This highlighted tensions and contradictions in the activities of tutoring and tutorials.

The research questions focused on students' experiences, how the inclusion of remote learning influenced tutors, and whether a remote student-centred approach was plausible. The results revealed a shift in students learning in the 21st century, primarily due to technological advancements. This shift ought to influence and inform how tutoring systems function. Perhaps, under a more definitive study on the topic and inclusion of tutor's ideas, this approach could have a more sustainable impact, especially considering a possible hard lockdown in the future.

The findings revealed that several students still prefer traditional tutoring methods because they feel value in face-to-face contact. In contrast, others prefer traditional methods because they do not have mobile devices. These students suggested that conventional methods of tutoring should remain in place. Our view is that perhaps a blended learning tutorial approach that would embrace remote learning post-COVID-19 is pedagogically and socially just. Given technological advancements, there is no question that remote tutoring is a viable way forward to continue successful tutoring and learning.

4. Conclusions

The successful implementation of remote learning using WhatsApp and BlackBoard Collaborate as discussion forums require extensive preparation, training, and planning from tutors. A dual partnership between what the lecturer offers, aligned to what and how tutors deliver instruction, will ensure the successful implementation of online tutoring. Thus, on this basis, we propose that mobile devices be incorporated more explicitly in both the lectures and tutorial spaces. In addition, discussion forums should be established in class to create a link and balance that continue in tutorials and remote contexts. The tutor remains a crucial component of remote tutoring and learning. The support and inclusion of tutors at higher education institutions are indispensable for remote tutoring and learning to be effective. The contribution of tutors remains relevant, and if given the opportunity, they can be productive to the benefit of the students, lecturers, and the institution. Indeed, tutors' influence reaches into the future of remote tutoring and learning and remains relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

5. References

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