Chapter 5

Four Strategies for Blended Learning in TVET:
A South African Post-Pandemic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The sudden outbreak of a deadly disease called COVID-19 caused by a coronavirus shook the entire world and was declared a pandemic. This situation forced lecturers to shift to online mode of teaching. The chapter sought to determine the benefits of blended learning in TVET and establish good practices of its implementation in other countries during pandemics. The challenges in implementing blended learning were determined. Finally, four strategies for blended learning in TVET from a South African post-pandemic perspective were proposed. The systematic literature review revealed that blended learning has to be embraced as the new normal mode of teaching post-pandemic. It was established that for a smooth transition from face-to-face to online learning careful planning, preparation, adaptation, and an appropriate learning space are required. Specific interventions to integrate blended learning principles in programme design and to train TVET lecturers and students in using digital technology are a prerequisite.

INTRODUCTION

According to United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 9.8 million African students experienced disruptions in their studies due to the closure of higher education institutions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (UNESCO, 2020). Similarly, in South Africa, the government was forced to enact a national lockdown, which meant that there was total closure of all schools, including colleges. South African education sector massively adopted different Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) tools (digital transformation) from primary education to higher and tertiary education (Mhlanga & Moloi, 2020). The danger of the pandemic contamination triggered institutions to move their courses online. However, going online is not that simple on a continent where only 24 percent of the population has access to the internet but with poor connectivity, exorbitant costs, and frequent power interruptions are serious challenges (UNESCO, 2020).

The pandemic threat and the approaches to overcome it may be catalytic for long lasting changes in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Among others, diversified means of educational delivery, in particular blended learning, may become more mainstream (Tamrat & Teferra, 2020). However, TVET institutions are being uniquely impacted, not only in relation to how they provide TVET in the context of social distancing and travel restrictions, but also in terms of how they are being forced to anticipate and adapt to what could very well be a significantly changed mode of teaching (World Bank, 2020). Chang-Richards, Vargo, and Seville (2013) stress that TVET institutions need to be resilient and should find new ways to continue with teaching-learning activities when disasters and crises (man-made and natural) occur.

BACKGROUND

Vocational Education and Training at TVET Colleges

The education sector in South Africa is governed by two national departments, namely the Department of Basic Education (DBE), which is responsible for primary and secondary schools, and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), which is responsible for tertiary education and vocational training (Mhlanga & Moloi, 2020). There are about 50 public TVET colleges in South Africa who are involved in the Vocational Education and Training to youth. Learners in South African schools study technical and vocational subjects with a prescribed practical component from grades 10 to 12. Four contact hours per week are recommended for the subject, to be split equally between the two aspects, practical work and theory (DBE, 2014).

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