

Chapter 17

Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning (ERTL) During COVID–19: The Ghana Communication Technology University Experience

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ABSTRACT

In response to the surging COVID-19 pandemic, the government of Ghana shut down all schools on March 16th, 2020. This compelled many higher education institutions globally and in Ghana to adopt emergency remote teaching and learning (ERTL) to ensure continuity of academic work. This chapter chronicles the experiences of Ghana Communication Technology University (GCTU) with the ERTL from March 2020 to date. Specifically, the chapter discusses what they did as an institution in terms of ERTL from the perspective of management, faculty, and support services. In this chapter, the authors provide a chronology of experiences with ERTL, the rationale behind actions taken, the mode of implementation, as well as the results of ERTL for faculty and students. Based on these experiences, the chapter advocates for the adoption of the pragmatism, accessibility, content, context, and empathy (PACCE) framework as a useful heuristic tool in ensuring equity and effectiveness of ERTL.

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INTRODUCTION

On March 12, 2020, Ghana recorded its first 2 cases of Covid-19. The government issued directives and on March 22 all borders were closed with a mandatory self-quarantine policy on all travellers (Ministry of Information, 2020). Government actions to stop the spread of the virus also called for the closure of schools. In compliance with these directives, the management of Ghana Technology University on Friday, 13th March 2020, decided to implement a set of measures that would help to ensure the continuation of teaching and learning using the already existing learning management system, Moodle. Thus, from a brick and mortar face to face teaching system, the institution was thrust into emergency remote teaching and learning (ERTL).

This chapter aims to chronicle our experiences as an institution from four (4) main perspectives; administrators, faculty, students, and support staff. The chapter begins with a chronology of events and actions taken at GTUC to ensure continuity of the academic calendar using ERTL. Our objectives are four-fold. First, we discuss preparations and guidelines implemented by senior management, faculty, and the Center for Online Learning and Teaching (COLT) that provided the needed support services for the transition to ERTL. Further, we reflect on the experiences of the ERTL from the perspective of faculty and students. In these reflections, we focus on how the institution attempted to deal with the inherent inequalities and challenges of ERTL within the context of a developing country. The chapter ends by highlighting the Pragmatism, Accessibility, Content, Context, and Empathy (PACCE) framework as a useful heuristic for ERTL.

BACKGROUND

Ghana Technology University College (GTUC) was officially inaugurated on August 15, 2006, as a university college from the erstwhile Ghana Telecom Training Centre (GTTC) run by the then British Administration. The University College is governed by a University Council, supported by the President, Vice President, Registrar, Deans of Faculties, and staff. Ten years after its inception, the institution has expanded. Since 2006, the university college has grown into a multi-campus university with five (5) satellite campuses in Accra, Kumasi, Ho, Koforidua, and Takoradi. Further, the institution has couched a niche for itself as a model university for transnational education, offering a diverse pool of programs in telecommunications, engineering, computer science, and business. GTUC is affiliated with the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) and University of Professional Studies (UPSA) in Ghana; Aalborg University in Denmark, Coventry University in the United Kingdom, CASS Europe, Anhalt University of Applied Sciences and Wildau University in Germany, as well as Maharaja Agrasen University, and M. S. Ramaiah University of Applied Sciences in India.

In recognition of the University College's critical role in training the requisite manpower to meet the skill demands of the fourth industrial revolution, the Parliament of Ghana in August 2020 passed the Ghana Communications Technology University Act (2020), thereby transitioning GTUC into a fully-fledged public university. Thus, the status of the university changed at the heights of the ERTL implementation. The University's mandate makes it imperative to be at the forefront of technology-based education in Ghana and the sub-region.

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