Redesigning Teacher Education in the Wake of Covid-19 and Future Emergencies: A Case of Zimbabwe

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Abstract: Globally, the need to mitigate the spread of Covid-19 had rendered the traditional face-to-face educational delivery systems of Higher Education (HE) irrelevant. In light of that, institutions of HE had abruptly introduced online teaching platforms as an alternative, though without auditing the lecturers' capacities and skills. Informed by the Appreciative Inquiry Model (AIM), this interpretive case study used virtual meetings and WhatsApp discussions to explore the professional limitations of Zimbabwe university lecturers on using the online platforms and their reactions to Teachers Education Programmes in the wake of Covid-19 and future emergencies. 12 lecturers drawn from three purposively selected Zimbabwean universities participated in the case study. Data were generated from questions developed in a way that encouraged the appearance of the Appreciative Inquiry Model stages. Findings suggest that some lecturers in Zimbabwe and possibly in other developing countries are inadequately trained to use online platforms. Institutions of Higher Education are therefore suggested to regularly audit their lecturers' skills and professionally capacitate them for re-tooling and aligning in order for the skills to match the dictates of future emergencies.
Keywords: Covid-19; online platforms; professional limitations; teacher education

https://doi.org/10.24193/JRHE.2021.1.3

1. Introduction

Worldwide, the need to mitigate the spread of Covid-19 had rendered the traditional face-to-face educational delivery systems of Higher Education (HE) almost irrelevant. To fulfil the needs and options for continuous learning, institutions of HE had to abruptly introduced online teaching platforms as an alternative, though without auditing the lecturers' capacities and skills. Studies on the current lecturers' e-competencies and how future lecturers could be professionally capacitated to bring meaningful teaching during times of pandemics and future emergencies in HE remain an unchartered territory. Consequently, our research was designed to take up the call by Azman and Abdullah (2021) who advocated for empirical research which can provide directions for how to train future virtual educators and learners. This study, as an extension of that call, argues that current lecturers' online competencies are inadequate in the wake of Covid-19 and other future emergencies, hence without a change in teacher education programmes, it would be similarly difficult for future educators to lecture using e-learning platforms, which in turn would adversely affect their students. The quality of university education and its outcomes depends largely on the quality of university lecturers. As such, the purpose of this study is to explore, from the lecturers' perspectives, the professional skills lacking in the current practising lecturers and establish what has to be altered in teacher education to train future online educators.

2. *Literature Review*

Since Covid-19 spread rapidly and globally within a short period of time after its first detection in December 2019, it forced massive

closures of higher education institutions (HEIs). Most institutions, if not the majority of them in the entire world, ordered the suspension of the face-to-face teaching activities to reduce the danger of contagion (Luppi et al., 2021). Intrinsically, policies and actions were crafted to protect the university community but at the same time providing to its needs and innovating processes and practices to cope with the Covid-19 emergency. As such, the sudden suspension of university activities around the world, due to travel and movement restrictions imposed by most countries to abate the spread of the pandemic, left lecturers of HEIs with no alternative except for the adoption of online teaching to ensure continuity of education to their students. As welcomed as that option might have appeared, it caused students to have reduced time to study, to change their interactions, to show indications of stress, decreased motivation and forced remote learning (Cahapay, 2021). Not to mention that lecturers had to adjust in no time, not only to new teaching approaches, methods, and strategies but also to their professional competencies. Such disruptions, in the context of education, are not only caused by Covid-19 but other natural disasters such as earthquakes, storms, floods and cyclones (Chimbunde, 2021). The advent of Covid-19 with its emerging context set the pace in rethinking of approaches to use in HE and has resulted in universities shifting their programmes to emergency teaching online (Bowden, 2021). This sudden shift highlights the need for institutions to understand how lecturer success can be supported as well as the importance of cultivating their competencies on the online platforms of delivery. As noted by Azman and Abdullah (2021), little is presently known known about the lecturers' ability and capacity to deliver quality lectures using the available online applications. This study presents a follow-up analysis to this scholarship gap.

While disasters and pandemics like Covid-19 had stress-tested HE, it had sent a clear message that online teaching, an offshoot of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, is a sure way to navigate the post disasters era in education. As argued by Azman and Abdullah (2021) most

academics share their HEIs' leadership's sentiments that the Covid-19 crisis has brought forward the inevitable digital platform by a full generation. Thus, resorting to online teaching and learning amid the Covid-19 pandemic was clearly an innovation, and an impactful ramification of an otherwise catastrophic global health crisis. However, rather than embracing the breakthrough with opens hands, the lecturers in HE were skeptical about the ability to maintain quality in online course delivery (Mustafa, 2020). This skepticism emanated from the fact that teachers were not ready to shift all their teaching online as the online transition was carried out too suddenly and with a lack of coordination. Some scholars (Azman & Abdullah, 2021; Paul & Jefferson, 2019) claim that online learning research and development is still in its infancy with regard to facilitators' ability to engineer successful interaction among students, between teachers and students and between students and content. In the middle of re-adjusting and recalibrating their pedagogical approaches to suit the online teaching, lecturers adopted a trial approach and their competencies were thus challenged since they were badly prepared. Tajuddin et al. (2021) claim there are clear indications of lecturers' concern on the needs for them to be fully prepared for online classes. Tajuddin et al. further argue "the preparation includes being technology savvy, understanding many online teaching applications and how to use them as well as managing undergraduates' learning experiences" (2021, p. 555). Failure to understand the appropriate online platform to use in a given context as well as the ability to identify the appropriate online applications qualifies one to be labelled e-teaching incompetent.

Consequently, full commitment to e-learning as a learning platform has, amid Covid-19 and future emergencies, forced massive adaptation and strongly impacted on educators' competencies. Anderson (2008) explains that in addition to the lack of required online specific pedagogical competences, it is generally agreed that in a normal situation, the challenge to effectively transfer what is taught in a face-to-face classroom to an online version remains a problem. This suggests

that being an experienced lecturer and possessing advanced skills of teaching using the face-to-face mode is necessary but not enough for a lecturer to become an effective online instructor. Since online learning would become a necessity in education in the aftermath of Covid-19 and other future emergencies, upcoming lecturers in HE must increase their capabilities to run online teaching well (Gulbahar & Kalelioglu, 2015). The problem of having incompetent online educators can be addressed by developing the online competencies of the current lecturers through in-servicing and then re-designing teacher education programmes in universities for future educators. This study argues that the guidance on how to train future virtual educators and learners can be generated from the lecturers who are in the field who can report what they are missing and what they are going through at the moment. It is them who can tell us where we are in terms of the scope and depth of the modules for teacher programmes in the context of online teaching and can then suggest the direction we must take to deal with pandemics and future emergencies. This is the contribution of this study.

Indeed, the detection of Covid-19 and the sudden introduction of online teaching and learning witnessed a surge of research world over. Research was conducted with varying focus, for example on: the challenges the students faced (Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Bao, 2020); pedagogical issues (Karalis & Raikou, 2020; Kgari-Masondo & Chimbunde, 2021); inequalities exacerbated by Covid-19 (Rigall, 2020; Wilson, 2020) management practices (Daniel, 2020; Viner et al., 2020). This research had expanded our knowledge on the level of preparedness of HE to embrace technology in the wake of Covid-19. However, most of these studies focused on quick-fix solutions on how the students could cope and how HEIs could navigate the Covid-19-induced challenges. Azman and Abdullah (2021, p. 552), like in many other studies, present an analysis of Malaysian HEIs' response towards Covid-19 of which they reported difficulties encountered by the lecturers while working online which included "internet connectivity, unsuitable working environment, lack of computer hardware and

knowledge on online teaching." Similarly, Nasution et al. (2021) explored the challenges of using e-learning platform amid Covid-19 outbreak and found out that HEIs are confronted with a new system which demands them to adapt. This conclusion was reached after it emerged from their analysis that working from home, dealing with technology, corresponding with students and adapting teaching processes distantly had challenged the lecturers' technology mastery. Mpungose (2021), in his study on a South African university, showed that while Zoom was effectively used for e-learning 'by universities from developed countries like the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Australia, universities in developing countries like Brazil, India, China and South Africa were struggling. The reason given for the limitation on its effective use was that the adoption of technology was imposed on the lecturers, and they were sometimes excluded from the planning process and received inadequate training. In Zimbabwe and South Africa, Kgari-Masondo and Chimbunde (2021) expanded the scholarship on impact of Covid-19 and the education of the once colonised by unpacking the educational experiences of the African child during Covid-19 and beyond in HE and suggested a decolonization approach to ensure students from all walks of life benefit from university education.

A European study drawing on HE staff's views by Coperland (2021), focused on addressing challenges of Covid-19 pandemic, reports that the impact of Covid-19 on higher education systems has been profound. "They have closed their campuses, shifted academic staff to "emergency remote teaching" and been forced to put their research projects on hold" (Coperland, 2021, p. 281). However, the study concentrated on the impact on research, fundamental values, funding and public responsibility, leaving unexplored the issues to do with the improvement of the lecturers' skills and functioning. In Indonesia, Junus et al. (2021) evaluated the readiness of lecturers and investigated the weaknesses and obstacles that lecturers must overcome in order to teach online during a pandemic that arises

unexpectedly. The study revealed that lecturers had quickly adapted to using a Learning Management System, and some have a tactical solution for most online classes with insufficient feasibility, but they do not have a strategic solution. Their sufficiency for teaching online courses was not optimised. In addition, Napier (2021) interrogated the challenges of the Covid-19 crisis for students and reported the digital platforms that were introduced in many institutions, alongside the interruption to seminars and practical classes, had an impact on the delivery of lectures.

These aforementioned studies extended our understanding on Covid-19 and its ramifications on education in general and HE in particular. However, contrary to many studies, Deyment and Downing (2020) warn that if research, practice and policy fail to connect online initial teacher education, the student experience and graduate learning outcomes may be hampered. This suggests that if research, practice and policy fail to connect in a coherent manner in what concerns online teaching, then there would be a high chance that the staff and students' overall experience could be severely affected.

2.1. The State of Online Teaching in Zimbabwean Universities

The 19 universities in Zimbabwe (of which 13 state owned and 6 privately owned) had not been very concerned about using online learning as they heavily relied on the face-to-face mode of delivery. These universities were only committed to the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in management of students' records, examinations and finance at the expense of online teaching and learning (Mupfiga, Mupfiga & Zhou, 2017). This could be so because Zimbabwe is highly underdeveloped in terms of internet accessibility, infrastructure and power generation, pre-requisites that are essential to e-learning. Prior to the outbreak of Covid-19 at the end of 2019, Moyo-Nyede and Ndoma (2020) using the Afro-barometer survey data from 2017 and

2018 report that a majority of Zimbabwean households did not have mobile phones with Internet access, computers, nor reliable electricity supply. The report also shows that even among the youngest adults, only one in three regularly went online. While these numbers may have improved in the past three years, they suggest the enormous hurdles that university lecturers and students could face in participating in online teaching and learning (Moyo-Nyende & Ndoma, 2020).

The need to accelerate online learning was noted in 1999 by the Nziramasanga Commission, but its uptake was slow until 2002. Since then, the provision of ICT resources to the education sector in Zimbabwe started to show signs of progress. In 2005, the Zimbabwean government developed a national ICT policy. Despite that paper exercise effort to make use of online teaching, a recent study by Tarisayi and Munyaradzi (2021) revealed that universities in Zimbabwe did not have an online learning and teaching platform before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. As such, degree programmes were offered through the face-to-face lectures on campus. Earlier on, Musarurwa (2011) had noted that the Zimbabwe ICT policy that was adopted in 2005 made significant references to the promotion of ICTs in education including their pedagogical use in educational institutions, although an audit was still to be carried out to ascertain its feasibility. Very little research, if any, was conducted to explore the lecturers' competencies on the use of online platforms and how universities can redesign teacher education programmes in Zimbabwe. This uncharted terrain is the focus of this study. The significance of this study hinges on the notion that teachers are challenged to learn and apply all their abilities and expertise during a pandemic such as Covid-19 so that they can continue to teach students by transferring knowledge, pedagogic abilities, and their belief to successful online teaching. Thus, the sudden demand for the digitalisation of the tertiary sector in the context of Covid-19 has required HEIs to fundamentally reconsider and reconceptualise the lecturers' competencies in handling online platforms.

3. *Theoretical Framework*

The study was undergirded by the Appreciative Inquiry Model (AIM), one of the organisational developmental models originally proposed by Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987). HEIs are formal organisations which, this study argues, can benefit from the model. Firmly embedded in the social constructionist theory, the appreciative inquiry model borrows from the narrative organisational development approaches such as storytelling, to generate new ideas, theories, and images of the future for change (Bushe, 2011). One of its tenets is that it evolves on recognizing and appreciating the competences of an organisation in order to improve the existent potentials (Bushe, 2011). AIM is grounded on the assumptions that the most important force for change are new ideas, and that it is a collective discovery process into the best of what is, what might be, what should be, and what can be (Asumeng & Osae-Larbi, 2015; Bushe,2011).

The AIM is a cyclic 4-D model which begins with **Discovery**, next is the **Dream** phase followed by **Design** and **Destiny** or **Delivery** stages. In the Discovery phase, an inquiry is made into the subject of change, using participants' reflections and discussions on the "best of what is" in relation to the subject (Asumeng & Osae-Larbi, 2015; Bushe, 2011). Juxtaposed to this study, the university lecturers were asked about their level of competencies on teaching using online platforms amid Covid-19 and future emergencies with the aim to solicit solutions to the problems and challenges facing the education sector. Asumeng and Osae-Larbi (2015, p. 34) explain "the Dream phase follows the Discovery stage and involves organizational members visualizing the organization in an ideal state in relation to the subject of change." It was during data generation that the university lecturers discovered their professional limitation and visualised the redesigning of teacher education programmes to improve practice. The Design stage follows the Discovery stage and it involves making concrete proposals and

suggestions for use by the organisation to close the gap between the current best practices and the ideal future state of the organization (Bushe, 2011). Drawing from this stage, university lecturers made suggestions on what HEIs had to do to ensure continuity in education despite the Covid-19 pandemic and the emergencies-induced challenges. At the last stage of the AIM is the Destiny/Delivery stage where members of the organization implement what was suggested. Here, the plans envisioned are put into practice.

Given the context of this study, the AIM was useful in attempting to answer: a) Where are the lecturers' level of competencies on the use of online platforms amid Covid-19 and future emergencies b) Where do we want to see their skills going? c) How then will we get there? And d) How will we know when we get there? (Barnard, 1991). The four stages of AIM were used as a way of sorting the data and made analysis easy. The AIM includes the various techniques which helped the lecturers as well as the universities adjust to changing circumstances of Covid-19 and beyond in a better way. The lecturers' views and their experiences could tell us where universities were in terms of the competencies in teaching students using online platforms and the direction they were taking to deal with pandemics and future emergencies. It assisted in the study to discern the strategies universities could follow to get where they intended to go and how they could reshape teacher education programmes. This was because since the early 1980s, AIM has been increasingly used by thousands of people and hundreds of organizations in every sector of society to promote transformative change (Hasmi, 2018) for the betterment of society. Bushe (2011), for instance, describe AIM as a process of building cooperative capacity for excellence and innovation in organisations.

4. Methodology

Informed by the Appreciative Inquiry Model, the study was framed from the qualitative approach to obtain a deep and comprehensive understanding of the lecturers' experiences on teaching using the online platforms, grounded on the argument that the major features of the qualitative methodology are meanings and the settings (Yin 2015). The interpretive case study was used to find meaning in context (Creswell & Poth, 2017); hence it will search for an understanding of the lecturers' experiences. I used an interpretive case study because it was endowed with multiplicity of perspectives which were entrenched in a particular context and because it was a "unique example of actual people in genuine locations" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 289). Three Zimbabwean universities provided the participants. These universities were consisted of one private Christian university and two state run institutions which enabled me to explore what was transpiring in Zimbabwe universities despite that I could not generalise the findings to all universities in the world. However, that provided an insight into some of the challenges faced in teacher education. Accordingly, I sought different views from 12 lecturers from 3 universities of Zimbabwe. The universities lecturers were purposively chosen taking into account of their different backgrounds in terms of where they were trained. The lecturers had at least five years university teaching experience, hence their shared stories were from experts who could provide rich information, which was sought in this study. Furthermore, their selection was premised on that they had trained as educators at different universities in Zimbabwe which provided insights on what they already possessed in terms of their competence on the use of the online platforms. I used of a virtual meeting and a WhatsApp discussion to elicit data from the 12 lecturers. The interview questions were developed in a way that encouraged the appearance of the Appreciative Inquiry Model stages, that helped me to capture the voices of the lecturers on their professional limitations on using the online platforms

which had been scanty and silent in scholarship. I elected to use the virtual meetings instead of in-person interviews because of Covid-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions. As such, virtual meetings allowed me to direct the interview questions to the focus of the project; to enable me to make cross-analysis of results (Cropley, 2015; Yin, 2015); and to open opportunities to probe further for new and relevant issues that could develop during the meeting. I created the Google meeting and then invited the 12 participants to join the meeting using the Google meeting codes. The meeting lasted for approximately forty-five minutes. I also used the WhatsApp discussion on the premise that it was a self-contained method which could also be employed as an additional source of data. That enabled me to hold and sustain productive discussions with the lecturers thereby capturing as much data as possible that was vital in understanding how they managed teaching students using different online teaching platforms. I created a WhatsApp group a day before the discussion. I then explained the purpose of the study. Issues of research ethics were also spelled out. I gave each participant the choice to leave the group if they were not willing to participate. Fortunately, none of the participants declined to take part.

4.1. Data Analysis and Interpretation Techniques

In data analysis, I made use of Miles and Huberman's (1994) basic steps for coding. Coding is summarising the content of short sections of text in a few words, on a sentence-by- sentence basis. In this study, emphasis was on the meaning the participants made of their narratives as well as the reason why it was "the way it was" (Maree 2012, p. 103). I used the stages of AIM as a way to sort the generated data and thereafter analysed in tandem with the themes that emerged from the study as per the dictates of the focus of the research. Thus, the data was audio-taped, listened to, transcribed, expounded upon, coded, reduced,

presented and analysed, while they "were very fresh in my mind" (Punch 2011, p. 199). Data analysis was done using current literature in conjunction with the Appreciative Inquiry Model. Data validity was enhanced through member checking, i.e. themes were returned to the participating lecturers who checked whether the "data matched or not to their lived experiences" in their contributions during the data generation process (Yin 2015, p. 123). Furthermore, validity was promoted through data triangulation by using two instruments, namely, the virtual meeting, and WhatsApp discussion to generate data. The use of different lecturers from different university settings also helped in validating the findings. Adherence to strict ethical guidelines so as to respect participants' secrecy, privacy, self-respect, rights, and anonymity was religiously followed. Before approaching the participants, permission was sought from gatekeepers of HEIs.

5. Findings and Discussions

Similar data generated from virtual meetings and WhatsApp discussion was categorised into themes, presented and analysed using current literature and the AIM lens. Hereunder are the findings and the discussions.

5.1. The Inquiry and Discovery Stage of the Lecturers' Competencies

The interview questions were developed in a way that would encourage the appearance of the Appreciative Inquiry Model stages. As such, it emerged from the virtual meeting that lecturers discovered that they were not familiar with the online platforms and could not even name them. L2 had this to say:

> "Aahh, let me be honest with you. During the introduction of the online teaching, I had no inkling idea of the names of these online

> platforms, let alone their use and application. It was after having informal discussion with my colleagues that I came to know of Google classroom, Canvas, Zoom and Google Meet just to mention some. It was again through these informal discussions that I learnt how to use some of these applications. Our university did not prepare us on how to use the application until after some months of struggling. Remember, all along our university had not started to teach students online despite the onset of the Fourth industrial Revolution."

This finding shows that online platforms were foreign to some lecturers, online teaching was new at some universities and that some lecturers were mandated to conduct online lectures without formal training from their institutions to empower them to deliver quality education. This could have been so because Covid-19 did not give warning shoots about its outbreak. Such is the nature of natural disasters and pandemics which normally do not announce their coming but their presence. It follows then that HEIs must be prepared for future emergencies and disasters. On such preparation is the quick appreciation and adoption of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in which the mode of lecture delivery might shift to online. The finding also suggests that some lecturers discovered their professional limitations and sought assistance from other faculty members which confirms what the AIM embraces at the Discovery stage. At this stage, the lecturers' level of competencies on the knowledge of the online platforms were questioned. It was then discovered that lecturers were unfamiliar to the use of some online platforms in HE amid Covid-19 and future emergencies.

From virtual meetings and WhatsApp discussion, it also emerged that lecturers in HE were not adequately trained to conduct lectures online amid Covid-19 and were again unprepared for any future emergency. L12 narrated thus:

> "I am not quite conversant with online teaching platforms notwithstanding I am computer literate. Besides, the computer skills I possess are rudimentary which I developed on my own as a result

> of my constant exposure to technological gadgets. So Covid-19 exposed my limitations at computer technology and its use for lecturing purposes, especially so amid disasters and pandemics like Covid-19 which require us to conduct lectures online."

In agreement, L5 had this to say:

> "I trained years ago when we were not taught computers as part of our course unlike current students who take a module in computers. Given that background, I am not adequately trained to conduct lectures online. All along, I heavily relied on the face-to-face mode which is phasing out due to pandemics such as Covid-19 which demands social distancing and remote online teaching."

The sentiments by the lecturers from the three universities used as casestudies reveal an acknowledgement that Covid-19 presented trenchant challenges which pointed to their incompetence on the use of online platforms. This shows that diverse members of the university community were at the Discovery stage where they shared their experiences on the online platforms (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). The power of AIM was shown by the way in which university lecturers became engaged and inspired by focusing on their own positive experiences (Bushe 2011). This study represents an inquiry made into the subject of the sudden shift to the use of online platforms. As embedded in the AIM, the lecturers reflected and discussed the "best of their potential" in relation to the sudden turn to online teaching platforms. As such, the AIM process was built upon an initial inquiry that asks questions about limitations and strengths which was in itself transformational, based on the premise that "organizations move toward what they study" (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987, p. 29). In the WhatsApp discussions, the university lecturers were asked to share positive and meaningful experiences from working in their departments. Thus, they revealed that the pandemic and its ramifications on the need to use online teaching had evolved so quickly challenging their abilities and skills to conduct lectures online. This confirms previous studies which observed that online learning research and development was still in its early development stages with regard

to facilitators' ability to engineer successful interaction among students, between teachers and students and between students and content (Azman & Abdullah, 2021; Paul & Jefferson, 2019).

It is a finding of this study that some universities in Zimbabwe did not train their lecturers to conduct the online lectures immediately after the introduction of the online teaching. As explained by L3 that:

> "No training was given to us before the launch of the online teaching, except suggestions on the use of WhatsApp and Google classroom. I had to navigate the online platforms on my own and that was indeed a challenge. A form of training was thus urgently needed to re-tool us with the necessary skills to use the online platforms. With time, videos were sent to us on how to teach online."

This surmises that no time was available to evaluate the competences of lecturers regarding the use of the online platforms. This was consistent with Mpungose (2021) who reported that lecturers were not given any framework, nor sufficient training prior to the launch of online teaching. This submits lecturers in HE were using trial-and-error approaches with their fully-online courses at the expense of the students. This suggests that most lecturers might have had no training and might not have been familiar with the online platforms introduced in HE. For effective teaching to take place, there was thus a need for professional development to improve the pedagogy and quality content of knowledge in online teaching and learning environments. As argued by Napier (2021) HEIs have a particular challenge ahead of them for the next academic year and beyond, in ensuring that the platforms introduced are accompanied by relevant instructions and training to support and equip all members of the academic community with sufficient digital competencies and skills.

The WhatsApp discussion revealed that some students in universities were more technological advanced than some of the lecturers. L1 in the discussion pointed out that:

> "I used to consult Sue (not her real name) on how to send assignments on the google classroom showing due dates and how to mark their work online. It was a role reversal. She was my tutor on

> using the online platforms and I was her lecturer on the content of modules I taught her. It was like a cart pulling the horse."

L7 also confessed:

> *"Most of my students were far ahead of me in terms of how to navigate the online platforms. They used to offer help when I was stuck. The only platform I used effectively was the WhatsApp. This is where I posted most of my students' work."*

This finding was unique taking into account that lecturers must be at the forefront in terms of disseminating knowledge and information. Lecturers were expected to be well read in areas they teach and practise. A sound survey of literature shows none reporting of this aspect during Covid-19 and other periods of time. This study argues that, when students have an edge in using technological devices and online platforms, the traditional student-lecturer relationship may begin to crack. Lecturers often feel the stress and anxiety when they are unable to address the technical issues reported by students. Hence, that gap had to be filled through professional development of lecturers on how to navigate the online platforms.

5.2. The Dream Stage and Visualisation of an Ideal State

The virtual meetings and WhatsApp discussion revealed that current lecturers in universities need to be re-tooled with skills to navigate the online teaching competently. In that way, they were visualising the ideal state. As pointed out in concurrence by L5, L6 and L10 when L3 reported that:

> "Our professional skills need to be beefed up by further training on online teaching and the platforms to use. If this is not done, there is a likelihood of dissonance taking place within departments. Uniformity expected in delivery systems in one university could be compromised because each lecturer will have the autonomy to select the platform of choice which one is comfortable with. We need skills to effectively

> use online platforms and this can only be acquired after a meaningful professional development."

The sentiments were further extended by L9 who said:

> "When we began online teaching, each one of us used a platform of their own choice. What mattered was the continuity of education to our students during the peak of Covid-19. As of now, this is the time for us to recover from the setbacks of Covid-19 and regroup and reimagine how to face any future emergencies. The starting point is training the current lectures on using online platforms and then redesign teacher education programmes to accommodate modules that teach our students online platforms, their effectiveness and how to use them in their future careers."

L11 also confirmed that:

> Our future educators must be competent at e-learning and related platforms. They need to be trained on how to teach online using diverse platforms just like how they are currently trained to teach face-to face during their Teaching Practice. They must practise teaching online whilst they are still at university. They have to be assessed on that component. This is to prepare for future emergencies which can again disrupt the education sector. We have learnt enough from Covid-19 and we need to borrow a leaf from our experiences. The Covid-19 pandemic was a historical moment of crisis and the turning point in the education sector. We need to look forward and impart knowledge on how to use diverse online platforms to future educators.

The sentiments were clear indications of the lecturers' concern on the needs for them to be fully prepared for online classes. From the lens of AIM, this indicates that the lecturers were now at the Dream stage, where they envisioned their universities with a foundation built on the exceptional and positive experiences discussed in the discovery of their incompetence. Hence, lecturers storied and co-constructed a vision of what they believed could be done in teacher education in future. The finding suggests that lecturers had concrete proposals and suggestions for use by the HEIs to close the gap between the current best practices and the ideal future state of education in emergencies (Bushe, 2011). It

also showed that the lecturers had even moved further to the next stage which is the Design phase when they articulated what sort of training was necessary to support positive experiences of conducting lecturers online using different platforms. As such, their voices reflected that basic Teacher education plans must be formed to and thus HEIs ought to be empowered to take action. That was premised on the basis that the recent shift in the mode of instruction had left some experienced teachers less confident about their competence, especially in handling technology in education. This brings the need for a drastic change in teacher education programmes.

6. The *Destiny* Stage as the Way Forward

The first three stages of the AIM had been experienced and discussed by lecturers from the participating universities. But, what was left was the Destiny or Delivery stage which this study argues for. One of the contributions to reach the destiny stage is to audit lecturers' capabilities and conduct regular professional development sessions for lecturers, in accordance to their limitations. In addition to this, there is an urgent need to re-train current lecturers to meet the new requirements of e-learning imposed upon us by Covid-19. The current study borrows from Hashmi (2018) who claim that a significant dilemma for any business in today's sustainability age is the ability to acknowledge society's challenges and create innovations to address those challenges. Forged by adversity induced by Covid-19 and possible future emergencies, this study observes the time is now for our HEIs to innovate and redesign teacher education programme to prepare upcoming and current educators for the unforeseen future emergencies. The study extends the claims by Gulbahar and Kalelioglu (2015) who argue that being an experienced lecturer and possessing advanced knowledge is necessary but not enough to lead to a lecturer becoming

an effective online platform user. As such, the study suggests innovation of teacher education amid Covid-19 and future emergencies which may close this gap. Given the findings of this study, HE in developing countries are suggested to design a new outline of teacher education programmes which captures training on the use of online platforms. This will hone policy practice in implementation of online university curriculum implementation amid emergencies. Most universities in developing countries had been hesitant to use online teaching preferring the face-to- face option which is now overtaken by disasters and pandemics due to global changes. As such, disasters and pandemics are sending clear messages that HE must adopt and embrace the Fourth Industrial Revolution if education is not to be disrupted again like what happened during the peak of Covid-19. To avoid similar occurrences, new programmes in teacher education should be introduced to train both the current and future educators on the use of online applications. This study suggests that stakeholders of any HEI should evaluate the current use of online platforms in their context and empower current lecturers to minimise the challenges they are facing today.

7. Conclusions

The study notes that due to the outbreak of Covid-19, most HEIs have responded by temporarily closing down any social interaction and by instructing their faculty members to shift to online instruction to mitigate the impact. Accordingly, HE made abrupt choices of the types of platforms to use to accommodate the rapid innovation in instructional process with very little consultation and perspectives of the lecturers as implementers on their ability to run these online applications. Using the AIM, the study had provided empirical findings on the lecturers' limitations on using online platforms and highlighted that it is this time that teacher education programmes be redesigned to suit the changes in education delivery systems imposed by Covid-19.

It emerged from the study that shifts to online teaching had propelled the lecturers to think outside the box and reinvented the way they operated. Overcoming technological challenges had been revealed as part and parcel of their job now. The study argues that with all its advantages, full commitment to e-learning as a learning approach, in contrast, has forced massive adaptation and strongly impacted the educator' training programmes. Competent e-lecturers are key to successful e-learning implementations and they should have unquestionable skills and experience on online applications for effective teaching. As such, online platforms such as Zoom, Blackboard, Canvas, Google Meet, Google classroom and Microsoft Teams, to name the most popular ones, have been developed to support online learning in HE amid emergencies. HEIs do not have other choices to run instructional practices but to use these platforms. In conclusion, while online platforms beams a light at the end of the tunnel, a lot has to be done in terms of providing training for the current and future lecturers, especial for universities that are new to teaching online a large portion of the curriculum.

The study has extended knowledge on the applicability of the AIM as a useful lens to transform HEIs into competent organisations. In this paper, I consider a strong culture of sustainability on online teaching to be one in which lecturers hold shared assumptions, values and beliefs. Thus, in the context of university transformation for continuity in education provision in the wake of emergencies, lecturers play an important role in determining the teacher education programmes. The research thus sets the stage for further empirical study to determine the nature and content of professional development that can be conducted to re-tool current lecturers and arm future educators with skills which will enable them to navigate online courses without challenges emanating from their incompetence in using online platforms. In addition, this paper suggests that HEIs in developing countries should make use of the AIM to innovate changes in education so that their

approaches suit the inevitable global changes infested with disasters and pandemics.

This qualitative case study was based on three universities in Zimbabwe. The sample was too small to warrant generalization, hence this study proposes a broader and more diverse sample from developing countries to provide a more holistic view of the lecturers' views on their competencies on the use of online platforms and their suggestions on what has to be done in teacher education to avoid discontinuity in education when faced with natural disasters and global pandemics.

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