

The Reality of the Digital Inequality and Its Negative Impact on Virtual Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic: The South African Perspective

Authors : Jacob Medupe

Abstract : Life as we know it has changed since the global outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and business as usual will not continue. The human impact of the COVID-19 crisis is already immeasurable. Moreover, COVID-19 has already negatively impacted economies, livelihoods and disrupted food systems around the world. The disruptive nature of the Corona virus has affected every sphere of life including the culture and teaching and learning. Right now the majority of education research is based around classroom management techniques that are no longer necessary with digital delivery. Instead there is a great need for new data about how to make the best use of the one-on-one attention that is now becoming possible (Diamandis & Kotler, 2014). The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated an environment where the South African learners are focused to adhere to social distancing in order to minimise the wild spread of the Corona virus. This arrangement forces the student to utilise the online classroom technologies to continue with the lessons. The historical reality is that the country has not made much strides on the closing of the digital divide and this is particularly a common status quo in the deep rural areas. This will prove to be a toll order for most of the learners affected by the Corona Virus to be able to have a seamless access to the online learning facilities. The paper will seek to look deeply into this reality and how the Corona virus has brought us to the reality that South Africa remains a deeply unequal society in every sphere of life. The study will also explore the state of readiness for education system around the online classroom environment.

Keywords : virtual learning, virtual classroom, COVID-19, Corona virus, internet connectivity, blended learning, online learning, distance education, e-learning, self-regulated Learning, pedagogy, digital literacy

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