Exploring academics' experiences of emergency remote teaching: A case study from the University of KwaZulu-Natal

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

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Date of submission: September 2022

DECLARATION

I, **Duduzile Amanda Mbatha,** declare that:

The work reported in this thesis is my own original work, and that this body of work has not been submitted and/ or accepted for examination or any other degree in any other institution of higher learning.

Other peoples' ideas or sources that were used or quoted in this thesis have been acknowledged through in text citations, and referenced accordingly.

Signature  _____

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STATEMENT BY SUPERVISOR

As the candidates' supervisor I agree/ do not agree to the submission of this thesis is submitted with/without my approval.

Signature 

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Date: 4 July 2022

ABSTRACT

In light of the social-distancing and non-medical preventative measures placed on South African citizens to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, many higher education institutions were compelled to shift from their traditional pedagogy (Kehrwald & McCallum, 2015). This resulted from the sudden closures of these institutions, which presented academics an opportunity to shift from the traditional pedagogy to a new student-centred mode of instruction, namely; emergency remote teaching (ERT) (Motala & Menon, 2020). This temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate mode due to circumstances (Hodges et al*.,* 2020) was meant to ensure that the academic year was not lost. However, academics found themselves confronted with the challenges of transforming their traditional methods of teaching face-to-face, to incorporate online pedagogies, while also dealing with fear of the unknown, technological stressors, and the inherent trauma of the pandemic. In this study, I explored the academics' experiences of ERT using an interpretivist qualitative approach, with phenomenology as a theoretical lens. I explored and theorised the complex and rich experiences of academics in their implementation of ERT. Seven participants were purposively selected, and semi-structured interviews conducted with them. The findings reveal that the sudden start of ERT presented time constraints on academics, which in turn, limited their preparedness and ability to produce quality online programmes. Moreover, the academics could not timeously put measures in place to control the increase in plagiarism. Academics longed for contact classes because of the lack of contact with students which allowed for the adoption of the ethics of care. The importance of technological support, the ability to adapt to change, and the need for adopting a care approach during such unprecedented times, was paramount. This study sought to uncover the importance of technical support and its benefits, and how institutions could improve the support provided. The study recommends that systems and policies be put in place to prevent the negative impact of plagiarism due to assessment methods used. It also recommends that academics experiences and insights of the emergency remote teaching be recognised, and that they be given platforms to effect change, where necessary.

Key words: Emergency remote teaching; higher education; teaching; assessments; transformation.

DEDICATION

To myself

"It always seems impossible until it's done." *Nelson Mandela*

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

COVID: ……..Coronavirus Disease

ERT: ……...…Emergency Remote Teaching

HE: ……...Higher Education

HEI: ……....……Higher Education Institution

HESA: ……Higher Education South Africa

NGO: ……Non-governmental Organization

NCCC:…….....National Coronavirus Command Council

NPO: …….Non-profit Organization

PhD: ……..Doctor of Philosophy

SARS……..Severe Acute Respiratory System

UKZN: …….…….....University of KwaZulu-Natal

UNICEF……..United Nations Children's Emergency Funds

WHO:……World Health Organisation

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CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW, CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Prior to March 2020, before the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, teaching and learning followed largely traditional regimes of face-to-face or contact teaching (Singh et al., 2021). Apart from face-to-face methods, some institutions also used distance learning, which involved non-contact teaching, and postal services. The sudden surge of the COVID-19 pandemic caused a shift from traditional teaching to instructional delivery using digital applications of teaching and learning, hence, the transition to emergency remote teaching (ERT) (Hodges et al., 2020, Erlam et al., 2021). Singh et al. (2021) observes that during this time, academics required soft skills, which were not necessarily important in the pre-COVID-19 era. They were required to successfully teach asynchronously or synchronously, observing the non-medical restrictions instituted to curb the spread of the pandemic. Local research has, to a certain degree, neglected academics' experiences of emergency remote teaching. This study sought to contribute data to enrich the limited research in the area.

In this chapter, I present the title, and focus of the study, rationale, summary of the literature review, research questions and objectives, research and data generation methods, data analysis, limitations, sampling, and ethical issues.

1.2 TITLE

The title of this research project is: Exploring academics' experiences of emergency remote teaching. A case study from the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

1.3 FOCUS AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The focus of this study was to explore academics' experiences of emergency remote teaching.

1.4 LOCATION OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in the Edgewood campus, in Pinetown, west of Durban. The institution was convenient for me as the researcher, as the seven

purposively selected participants reside in and around the campus. The study explored how the seven participants navigated their way through emergency remote teaching at this institution.

1.5 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The main focus of this study was academics' experiences of emergency remote teaching in a South African higher education institution. The motivation for conducting this study was based on my personal experience, as well as the literature I engaged with. The impetus to my study was the state of emergency in South Africa, necessitated by the highly contagious COVID-19 virus. Many higher education institutions had to effect closures to ensure the safety of students, academics, support staff and other personnel (Ali, 2020). I was affected by these closures as I was doing my Honours degree and had to immediately adapt to a new mode of teaching radically opposed to face-to-face teaching. I found this very confusing, and at times, demotivating as I was deprived of the contact and support I usually received during traditional classes. I was therefore, motivated to explore how my experiences were similar to or different from, those of the academics, and how they navigated emergency remote teaching in a South African university during COVID-19.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

The emergence of the COVID-19 virus called upon academics across the globe to examine their pedagogical practices, how they prepare lesson materials, how they interact with students online, their infrastructure advancements, and their commitment to development in technological advancement (Flynn & Noonan, 2020). For many academics, the implementation of technology-enhanced learning in university degree programs is associated with change, particularly changes to academic work (Kehrwald & McCallum, 2015). However, McNaught (2002) sees information technology as a means of streamlining operations in higher education.

Literature suggests that, for many academics, the increasing emphasis on the use of computer technology for administration, research and teaching is highly threatening (see McNaught, 2002; Mason, 2014; Alhumaid, 2019). Thus, there is need for effective staff development to be positioned at the centre of university functions, while retaining connections with the needs and perceptions of teaching staff (McNaught, 2002). The impact of the pandemic on the wider education system, across all contexts, has largely been profound; presenting significant challenges for learning, teaching and assessment (Crick et al*.,* 2020). It has led to changes in pedagogical approaches, as well as; a) planning and design process, b) interaction with

students, c) increase in workload, and d) professional development, (Kehrwald & McCallum, 2015).

The main concern was whether the move to online learning, teaching and assessment would be as pedagogically beneficial to students as face-to-face teaching (Crick et al., 2020). This concern stemmed from the notion that online learning is of "lower quality" when compared to the traditional face-to-face method of teaching (Hodges et al., 2020). This led to a mix of conventional and non-conventional methods or blended learning being utilised during the peak of the COVID-19 outbreak (Raheim, 2020). Blended learning can be defined as the application of more than one method, strategy, technique, or media in education. Academics had to blend conventional, face-to-face mode of instruction with online techniques and strategies. Other alternatives to blended and online learning are the use of flipped classrooms, and the newly defined emergency remote teaching (ERT), which according to Ali (2020) is not seen as a big change for many universities in the world. The flipped classroom was among the strategies used by most academics to ensure student engagement prior to the pandemic, and which also proved useful during the pandemic. A flipped classroom is a form of blended learning that combines outside of classroom teaching and technology to enhance the understanding of students (Pakpahan, 2020). The author also believes that Flipped classroom through online communication may facilitate social-distancing as one of the main safety procedures towards COVID-19. Research conducted by Johnson et al. (2020) has also revealed that a higher proportion of academics reported using synchronous video (80%), compared to asynchronous (pre-recorded) lectures (65%) and pre-recorded video from external sources (51%). The above measures demonstrate the use of technology during the pandemic to ensure the continuation of the academic year. Motala and Menon (2020) argue that academics who previously used technology to support face-to-face/ contact teaching to construct engaging learning opportunities, no longer had this blended option. They now had to teach solely through technology, and consequently the whole enterprise had to be re-thought and re-imagined.

While universities offered the resources they had to help academics adapt to the technical aspects of their new reality, they could not completely prepare them for the pedagogical challenges that resulted from teaching remotely during a crisis (Gelles et al., 2020). Raheim (2020) notes that platforms such as Moodle, Zoom, Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp were of utmost importance to keep the interactions between students and academics. Ali (2020) also

observes that New York University Shanghai and Duke Kunshan University offered successful adaptation and rapid deployment of educational technology products, like the videoconferencing platform Zoom and Moodle. The goal was to retain normalcy amid unusual circumstance and continue to deliver teaching and learning through a variety of online platforms (Motala & Menon, 2020).

It has been argued, however, that distance education is a disruptive technology for "conventional institutions of higher education" (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2003, p. 123). This specifically refers to Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL), blended learning, online learning, and just recently, emergency remote teaching; all using a variety of technological tools which are termed disruptive. Garrison et al. (2003) and Garrison and Kanuka (2004) state that "universities provide an opportunity to embrace and learn from disruptive technologies as part of their ongoing evolution, and mitigate the risk of 'sliding into mediocrity and …irrelevancy as far as the teaching function of the university is concerned" (Archer, Garrison, & Anderson, 1999, p. 28). Another challenge of greater concern is that online learning lays bare the digital divide, which distinctly differentiates between those that have online access and those that do not have access (Boyd, 2016). This simply means that those that have no access to computers and other technology are placed at a disadvantage of not benefiting from online teaching and learning, and those with access will benefit even more. Compounding the problem of the digital divide (albeit to different extents) was insufficient bandwidth that produced delays or connection failures during lessons and video conferences (Ferri et al., 2020). Raheim (2020) points out that some academics were inexperienced in using computer technology themselves, which caused lessons being delayed, and slowed down the learning process. Ali (2020) however, argues that the use of ICT in education enhances lesson delivery, and has been adopted by many higher education institutions. As cited in Ali (2020), technology further acts as a catalyst and supports staff members in lesson preparation and delivery. Capacitating academics for the new normal was therefore the key component of curriculum delivery under vastly changed conditions (Motala & Menon, 2020).

From the literature reviewed, four main themes emerged that led to an understanding of academics' experiences; a) planning and design process, b) interaction with students, c) increase in workload, and d) professional development.

Planning and design

The emergency remote teaching demanded that academics plan and design their lectures well in advance (Kerwald & McCallum, 2015). With forward planning, most of the work was done at home to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus. A study pointed out that some academics were inexperienced in using technology, and learning was delayed or slowed down compared to face-to-face learning (Raheim, 2020). Trust and Whalen (2020) add that lack of preparation, training, and support for the design of quality instruction with technology created further stressors and barriers to teaching and learning remotely, in times of need. Some academics did not concur, as they saw this as an opportunity to engage in more technologies to enhance their lessons and increase student interaction and participation (Trust & Whalen, 2020). To ensure student engagement, Ferri et al. (2020) posits that innovations in teaching methods are needed to engage students, and stimulate their proactive behaviour. This is difficult to obtain when one is only connected online. It is evidently clear that there is need for post-secondary online learning expertise, which should serve as a reminder that institutions need to cultivate this competence (Ali, 2020).

To ensure continuity of learning for any situation, and support learners across spatial and temporal boundaries, educators need to be fluent users of technology, creative and collaborative problem solvers, adaptive, and socially aware experts throughout their careers (Trust & Whalen, 2020). This encourages academics to enhance learning opportunities and build distinctive learning environments through technological advancements (Raheim, 2020). Employing these strategies or lessons learned, the academics can plan ahead for their lessons while producing high quality work and programmes with minimal hiccups, to ensure optimised learner engagement.

Student engagement or interaction

When university closures were put into effect, students had to leave residences and go to their homes. Home, for some, was deep rural areas with no access to reliable internet connections or Wi-Fi. The lack of reliable internet connection had adverse implications. Especially when there were academics who offered short-term quizzes, and students were expected to submit answers before the time is up (Raheim, 2020). This affected students' performances in their end of semester exams and end of year exams. With this change, academics had to be proactive when

planning their interaction with students, by preparing for possible questions that may arise during the remote lesson. Participants in the study by Kehrwald and McCallum (2020), experienced changes in the way they planned their teaching, including explication of otherwise tacit teaching strategies and tactics, and the associated roles for both teaching staff and students. Pre-empting what students would ask during a lesson was important for academics to help the students who would not ask questions immediately.

Students were reported to be less confident in this new environment. Statistically, 22% appeared confident engaging remotely (Flynn & Noonan, 2020). Academics could not perform their role fully in terms of providing timeous feedback and affective support, as students were off campus. Showing compassion and care for students can be more difficult when there is physical and social distance (Gelles et al*.,* 2020). Some student-teacher relationships developed positively within emergency remote learning, as it was easier to put a face to a name. Conversely, some relationships may have been hindered by the emergency remote teaching, as most academics were used to eye contact and body language during personal conversations (Whittle et al*.,* 2020). It was felt that a disconnect existed between the student and the lesson, and students lost concentration easily. Academics observed a marked decrease in student engagement with learning, with the teacher, and with other students, during the move to remote teaching (Whittle et al*.,* 2020).

Professional Development

New lessons needed to be learnt within the pandemic, to effectively develop academics' skills in emergency remote teaching. The COVID-19 outbreak exposed a significant variation in academics' readiness to use technology to support learners at a distance (Trust & Whalen, 2020). Most academics seemed to be learning online and remote teaching strategies and tools, while teaching online or remotely (Trust & Whalen, 2020). Therefore, there was lack of quality in the programmes designed by the academics. This may have caused hindrances to teaching remotely in times of a pandemic. Supporting academics through this transition plays a vital role. Support in this case incorporates institutions offering academics upgraded infrastructure and technological tools, professional development, as well as funding and grant schemes (McNaught, 2002).

For many academics, the increase in the use of computer technology for administration, research and teaching is highly threatening (McNaught, 2002). It is thus, pivotal to engage academics in continuous development and training to boost their self-confidence and ability to use such technology. Professional development should be made the centre of any institution's stance towards creating and offering successful quality education. A needs assessment can be conducted to effectively gauge the areas in need of attention, and programmes offered to provide suitable support to the academics. As technology becomes more mainstream, support services need to be scaled up (McNaught, 2002). This may include, engaging in the 4th Industrial revolution, which requires individuals to be techno savvy. This may be seen as an expensive option. However, one can gain access to such technology using low-cost smart phones and available broadband internet, offered by municipalities in South Africa, and by other universities. Emergency remote teaching and learning can, therefore, scale down costs brought about by expensive infrastructure, large class sizes and the heavy academics' workloads (Kalantzis & Cope 2020; Du Preez & Sihna, 2020, as cited in (Merisi & Pillay, 2020).

1.7 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives that guided this study were:

- To explore academics' experiences of the emergency remote teaching.
- To understand how academics' experience the emergency remote teaching.
- To understand why academics' experience the emergency remote teaching in the way that they do.

1.8 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The critical questions that this study sought to answer were:

- What are academics' experiences of emergency remote teaching?
- How do academics' experience emergency remote teaching?
- Why do academics' experience emergency remote teaching in the way that they do?

1.9 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is considered a plan or blueprint of how a particular study shall be carried out (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The research design, therefore, lays a foundation of how the

research questions can be answered strategically. This study, largely being qualitative in nature, utilised research methods that explored and theorised the participants' lived experiences, emotions, and the meanings they attach to them, without bias, prejudice and or generalisation, to serve the purpose of the research objectives. Research methods are the strategies, processes or techniques utilised in the collection of data or evidence for analysis, in order to uncover new information or create a better understanding of a topic.

1.9.1 Research paradigm

This study was underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm, which focuses on meanings and attempts to understand the context and totality of each situation by employing a variety of qualitative methods (Mouton, 2004). The epistemology of this tradition focuses on the relative nature of knowledge, and understands that knowledge is created, interpreted and understood from a social as well as an individual perspective. The research aimed to perceive the experiences of academics from their own point of view and explain why participants behaved the way they did during emergency remote teaching. As such, participants in an interpretive method are seen as active agents who are autonomous and able to create their social reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). This study, therefore, focused on the unique experiences of the academics and how they negotiated emergency remote teaching in a South African higher education institution.

1.9.2 Research approach

This study was conducted within the confines of a case study approach. This approach is largely informed by the interpretive paradigm along with the qualitative research approach, to critically address the research questions. Shuttleworth (2015) states that a case study is an in-depth study of a particular situation. The use of case studies brings about a deeper understanding of complex issues through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events and their relationships. One of the advantages of a case study, as highlighted by Crabtree and Miller, (1999), is the close collaboration between the researcher and the participant, in enabling participants to tell their story. The case study approach was thus, chosen to provide insight into the "feelings" of academics with regards to emergency remote teaching, the strategies used to navigate through unchartered waters, and the skills acquired during remote teaching in the time of the pandemic.

1.9.3 Participant selection

Purposive sampling is a method where participants are chosen by the researcher for the purpose a researcher has an interest in, specifically for the potential they have to help the researcher achieve their research purpose (Tongco, 2007). The participants in this study were selected specifically for the purpose of this study and for the skills and knowledge they possessed about the phenomenon.

A small sample of academics from the institution was selected to represent the institution's population (Creswell, 2012), in terms of their occupation as academics, education background, experiences, availability and willingness. A sample of twelve, diverse participants was initially sought. They were ethnically diverse, came from different academic disciplines, and had varying age groups. This was to ensure that data was representative of the wider population. The decision to have twelve academics was based on manageability. However, due to tight schedules, heavy workloads and other work inherent stressors academics faced during the time of data generation, I was only able to interact with seven participants. Although this seemed like a negative factor at the time of data generation, the data gathered was still insightful and led to many worthwhile discoveries about the academics' experiences of emergency remote teaching.

1.10 Data Generation

Qualitative research involves using a variety of data generation methods. Creswell (2012) explains that a qualitative study uses data generation methods such as interviews, document analysis, reflections, and observations.

1.10.1 Semi-structured interviews

In keeping with the interpretive paradigm underpinning this study, the main data generating tool that was used were semi-structured interviews. Interviews are frequently utilised in generating data for research and semi-structured interviews are the most used interview method in research of a qualitative nature (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson & Kangasniemi, 2016). To successfully gather information suitable for this interpretive qualitative case study, I used semistructured interviews. According to (Creswell, 2014), they are suitable as they have a set of key questions which are followed, that offer an option to probe the participant further

because the questions are open-ended. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews offers the qualitative researcher the advantage of being able to modify their line of inquiry, to follow up interesting responses, and to investigate underlying motives, enabling a more in-depth understanding (Creswell, 2014). While interviewing the participants, the semi-structured interviews offered me flexibility to change my line of questioning, to probe further into interesting points, and to get ample responses. Semi-structured interviews were taken as an appropriate instrument to use for a small sample such as that selected in this study. This type of interview allowed me to remain in control of the topic, while also allowing the participants to freely give subjective responses as suggested by (Cohen et al., 2011). The interviews were done virtually to keep with COVID-19 social distancing regulations.

These interview sessions were conducted to establish accurate narratives of the academics, while allowing them to help us understand their experiences of the emergency remote teaching. It is important to note that all virtual interviews were recorded and transcribed to provide a more accurate rendition of the interview.

1.11 Data analysis

Once data had been generated during the field work, I, had the responsibility of analysing it and deriving findings from it. Data analysis is a process of systematically studying data in order to detect patterns, describe facts, and develop explanations of a certain phenomenon under study (Bertram & Christiansen, 2004; Lisa, 2002). In keeping with the qualitative research methods, data was thematically analysed into nine prominent themes, with the aim of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within the generated data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. Thematic analysis goes beyond simply counting phrases or words in a text, to identifying implicit and explicit ideas within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This aided in developing the key facets within the mental space, that forms and shapes academics' perspectives and perceptions to create an understanding of what it was like to experience emergency remote teaching.

1.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research communities are guided by certain ethics when carrying out studies. Ethics focus on individual and communal codes of conduct that require adherence to some principles (Biggs & Coleman, 2007). Ethics offer rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards participants and require researchers to respect the interests of the participants (Flick, 2004). The basic principles include ensuring participants' freedom to participation, respect for the truth, and abstaining from the infringement of dignity and privacy of the participants (Pillay, 2020). In this study, I obtained permission from the University where the study was conducted, after which, I also secured ethical clearance to conduct the research before data was generated. The prospective participants were given letters of consent to sign which contained all the details pertaining to the study, with the option of participating and/ or withdrawing at any stage of the research. The participants' anonymity and confidentiality were safeguarded.

1.13 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness is referred to as the level at which the study can be trusted. As my study fell under the interpretivist paradigm, trustworthiness is an important component. It was explained in this research study in terms of what it is, what is included in it and how it was ensured. Trustworthiness is synonymous with standards of truth and value in the work presented. According to Guba and Lincoln (2003), four issues of trustworthiness are vital in any qualitative research, namely; credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (all these key concepts are discussed intensively in chapter 3 of this study).

1.13.1 Confirmability

One of the trustworthiness concerns in qualitative research is confirmability, which is taken to mean that the findings are a depiction of the participant's answers to the questions asked and not the interpretations of the researcher (Polit & Beek, 2012). To keep up with the concerns of confirmability, I reverted back to the participants to show them the findings in the semistructured interviews as transcribed, so that they could check and verify that the responses were a true reflection of what they had said, and not my biases as a subjective human being.

1.13.2 Credibility

Credibility is the confidence we have on the data (Amankwaa, 2016, p. 121). It is taken to be the truthfulness of the data or the resemblance of the viewpoints of participants (Cope, 2014). Credibility answers the question of how believable or authentic the data is in the realm of being a representation of the actual views of the participants. To facilitate credibility in this study, I made sure that the semi structured interviews reflect the views of the participants as true and reliable data.

1.13.3 Dependability

Dependability involves the explicit revealing of the steps taken in generating data and making sure that it remains unchanged (Cuthbert & Moules, 2014). Dependability relies on making sure that the necessary steps to generating data are clearly stated and that there is consistency within the data. Dependability is achieved in a study by an audit trail which involves reverting back to what was used to generate data and the type of analysis used in the study (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). I ensured this by transcribing the semi-structured interviews so that they provide crude data, and I subsequently kept records of the interviews.

1.13.4 Transferability

Transferability refers to the likelihood of transferring the results of one research study to another in a different setting or context (Moon et al., 2016) involving different groups of people mostly known as research participants (Anney, 2014). The findings of this research may likely not be transferrable as they are only for the academics of a particular higher education institution because they are the focus of this research project. Moreover, it is a study conducted in the current academic year while another study conducted in another academic year could lead to different findings. Context is also key in research. This study took place at the University of KwaZulu Natal, Edgewood Campus' School of Education. A study in a different context could yield different results as context would that of the present study.

1.14 LIMITATIONS

The study was carried out with academics from the University of KwaZulu Natal, which was a limitation as the data was only in relation to one province and one university campus. This then implied that the views and data generated could not be transferable to another institution or

other academics. However, focusing on a small group of academics and exploring their experiences of emergency remote teaching helped me to explore, understand and theorise in depth, the challenges, limitations and successes of teaching and learning during the pandemic.

I anticipated that the study could be further limited by the participants' psychological or emotional state of mind, as a result of the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some could withhold certain information for privacy reasons, others because of it still being a recent occurrence that brings back unwanted memories. To avert this limitation, I exercised caution along with patience and compassion when dealing with such cases, to avoid participants exiting my research.

Due to rising number of COVID-19 cases and deaths, academics were particularly reluctant to participate in face-to-face interviews. This affected the strategies I had initially put in place to conduct the interviews and had to revert to some virtual interviews and some telephonic interviews, which I recorded. The telephonic interviews took away the element of facial expressions that would have allowed me, as the researcher to note different emotions of the participants. Owing to connectivity issues and network availability issues, it was not always easy to conduct the interviews at the scheduled times. It was important to avail myself at any time to accommodate the academics at times that were most convenient for them.

The alternate methods were taken to safeguard against the further spread of the virus, and to also prevent compromising the academics' well-being.

1.15 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1.15.1 Chapter One

This chapter provided the reader with a general overview of the study. The chapter outlined the title, focus, research objectives and the research questions of the study, as well as the location of the study. In addition to this, the chapter highlighted the rationale of the study, the researchers' personal motivation for conducting the study, a short discussion of the literature on the academics' experiences of emergency remote teaching.

1.15.2 Chapter two

The chapter provides the reader with the reviewed literature on specific areas related to the study, namely; Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT), the implementation of ERT in higher education institutions, the importance of technology and other technology related elements, which formed an integral part to the success of ERT, while also posing challenges to the people concerned.

1.15.3 Chapter three

This chapter provides details on the theory adopted by this study to achieve the research objectives. It gives insight on the importance of theory, and discusses the theory used in this study. Furthermore, it details how the theory enabled the researcher to relate to the academics, while also allowing for an articulate conveyance of their experiences of emergency remote teaching.

1.15.4 Chapter four

This chapter explains the research design and methodology used by the researcher in this study, to achieve the research objectives. The study is positioned within the interpretive paradigm using qualitative research. This chapter outlines the participants of the study, the research method, as well as the purposive sampling used in the study. It also covers issues of trustworthiness, ethical considerations and the study limitations.

1.15.5 Chapter five

This chapter is the first of two chapters that focus on the analysis and discussion of the findings emanating from the semi structured interviews. The data generated from the semi-structured interviews is categorised thematically, and is used in this chapter to support the research findings. The thematic analysis of the data was utilised to allow the data to speak for itself.

1.15.6 Chapter six

This is the second chapter that provides the discussion of the data and the analysis of the themes emanating from the experiences of academics. In this chapter, there is a theoretical discussion

about the research participants' lifeworld and their personal experiences of emergency remote teaching. It further moves to discussing the intentionality of the academics' and their conscious acts involving emergency remote teaching. Then moves to discuss the noema-noesis of the academics along with bracketing, which was used to avoid any preconceived knowledge that might influence the outcomes of this study.

1.15.7 Chapter seven

This chapter provides a summary of the key findings of the research project, major findings and recommendations emerging from the analysed data.

1.16 Chapter summary

This chapter provided the reader with a background to the study by outlining the title, focus, research objectives, research questions, and location of the study. The chapter further highlighted the rationale of the study, and the researchers' personal reasons for conducting the study. It also made a short discussion of what the literature says about academics' experiences of emergency remote teaching. In addition, this chapter also briefly covered the research design and methodology of the study.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a broad overview of the literature of the academics' experiences of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this chapter, I provide a detailed definition of emergency remote teaching and then proceed to locate ERT in the broader field of online learning. I further discuss the challenges, successes and indepth experiences of academics at a research-intensive university in South Africa. In this chapter, I begin by providing a conceptual definition and explanation of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT). Further to this, I discuss how academics manoeuvre or navigate their way through the sudden introduction of ERT, how ERT was implemented, and academics' reflection on the experience of using ERT. I end by mapping the gaps in the field, which this study seeks to address.

2.2 Emergency Remote Teaching

According to Hodges et al. (2020), emergency remote teaching is a temporary shift in instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances. This involves the use of technology, such as computers, mobile phones and other devices, in a remote setting, as opposed to face-to-face instruction. It is thus, important to highlight what a remote teaching system is. Shapiro (1988) defines a remote teaching system as a method which permits a teacher to instruct a number of students, where the students and the teacher are dispersed among remote sites. It is one way of addressing the gap in education systems worldwide (Hodges et al., 2020). Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) is not usually planned in advance, and involves a sudden shift from traditional teaching into a remote one, occasioned by emergency situations like the outbreak of Coronavirus in different countries (Affouneh et al., 2020). Emergency remote teaching is mainly designed to provide temporary access to instruction and instructional supports in a manner that is quick to set up, and reliably available during an emergency or crisis (Hodges et al., 2020). Furthermore, ERT requires instruction with corresponding instructional design and systematic planning for its effectiveness (Talidong, 2020).

According to Mohmmed et al. (2020), ERT involves ultimate exploitation of the available remote teaching tools for delivering the curriculum or educational materials that would

normally be delivered physically or as hybrid or blended courses. Bozkurt et al. (2020) further note that ERT is about surviving in a time of crisis, with the resources available, whether offline or online.

Emergency remote teaching is not a new practice as it has been used in previous years by various countries, such as when various parts of the United States were devastated by Hurricane Katrina in the year 2005 (Gelles et al., 2020). South Africa also experienced a state of crisis in October 2015 during the #FeesMustFall struggle, in the form of student revolt against financial exclusion from higher education (Booysen, 2016). In the more recent times, ERT was used when China banned most face-to-face activities, including teaching (Ali, 2020). The University of Johannesburg (UJ) was among the few which did not lose a single day of academic activity, when other universities were closed as a result of student protests for the #FeesMustFall struggle (Motala & Menon, 2020).

Emergency remote teaching intersects with distance learning, online learning, and blended learning (or flipped classroom), as they use similar methods. However, the other platforms' methods do not capture the essence of what ERT is, especially during a time of unintended interruptions. Bozkurt and Sharma (2020) state that ERT should not be labelled as online learning, considering the difference in educational approaches. Therefore, to fully conceptualise emergency remote teaching, it is significant to distinguish the difference between ERT and the other modes of instruction. Moore et al. (2010) describes distance learning as an effort of providing access to learning for those who are geographically distant. Most authors note online learning as access to learning experiences via the use of technology (Moore et al., 2010) and is the more preferred, conveniently used, and referred to in education. Blended learning is an approach that combines online education materials with in-person classroom methods (Yigit et al., 2014).

2.3 Online Learning vs ERT

Volery & Lord (2016), state that online delivery is a form of distributed learning enabled by the Internet. Whereas ERT is a mode of learning and teaching which incorporates the use of the internet but is used in cases where a state of emergency has been declared (Hodges et al., 2020). Harasim (2000) reiterates that online learning uses the Web or computer networks as the primary environment for course discussion and interaction. Emergency remote teaching is

operated remotely with utilising that particular individuals' connectivity network for example bandwidth or WIFI. Online delivery goes beyond traditional computer learning, as it makes full use of the internet and other digital technologies. Online delivery can facilitate distance education by making course material accessible anytime anywhere (Volery & Lord, 2000). Similarly, ERT facilitates learning remotely making learning materials readily accessible but, would not be necessitated if the emergency situation subsided (Mohmmed et al., 2020). There is, however, a notion that online learning is of lower quality compared to the traditional face-to-face method of teaching (Hodges et al., 2020). Online learning has provided the opportunity to teach and learn in innovative ways unlike the teaching and learning experiences in the normal classroom setting (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Emergency remote teaching on the contrary, comprises ultimate exploitation of the available remote teaching tools for delivering the curriculum or educational materials that would normally be delivered physically or as hybrid or blended courses (Mohmmed et al., 2020). This has thus, increased the demand for online learning as places in traditional campus-based universities are outstripped by the large numbers of students (Kehrwald & McCallum, 2015). The high demand for online learning also implies the need for academic staff to actively engage with online learning, allowing them to support students to achieve high quality learning.

Higher education institutions should carefully consider their online learning options, and the use of technology in education (Raheim, 2020), so that learning can be more accessible to both students and academics regardless of technological capabilities.

2.4 Changes associated with emergency remote teaching

For many academics, the implementation of technology-enhanced learning in university is associated with change, particularly in the nature of their academic work (Kehrwald & McCallum, 2015). With the imminent changes caused by the pandemic, the main concern was whether the move to online learning, teaching and assessment would be as pedagogically beneficial to students as face-to-face teaching (Crick et al., 2020). The concerns were quality based and pertained to comparisons between traditional face-to-face instruction and online learning. This led to a mix of conventional and non-conventional methods or blended learning being utilised remotely during the COVID-19 outbreak (Raheim, 2020). Blended learning can be defined as the application of more than one method, strategy, technique, or media in education. Academics had to blend conventional, face-to-face mode of instruction, while also

utilising online techniques and strategies. Other alternatives to blended and online learning include the use of flipped classrooms, and the newly defined ERT which, according to Ali (2020) is not seen as a big change for many universities in the world.

The blended learning approach which involves the use of a flipped classroom was among the strategies used by most academics to ensure student engagement prior to the pandemic. It also proved to be a useful strategy used during the pandemic. A flipped classroom is a form of blended learning that combines outside of classroom teaching and technology to enhance the understanding of students (Pakpahan, 2020). Pakpahan (2020) also believes that Flipped classrooms through on-line communication may help tackle the concern of social distancing as it is one of the safety protocols used during COVID-19. Research conducted by Johnson et al. (2020) has also revealed that a higher proportion of academics reported using synchronous video (80%), compared to asynchronous (pre-recorded) lectures (65%) and pre-recorded video from external sources (51%). This demonstrates the use of technology during the pandemic to ensure the continuation of the academic year. Motala and Menon (2020) argue that academics who previously used technology to support face-to-face/contact teaching to construct engaging learning opportunities, no longer had this blended option. They now had to teach solely through technology, and consequently, the whole teaching had to be re-thought and re-imagined. There was the need to acknowledge the significance of utilising educational technologies to their full extent in curriculum implementation, considering that education delivery is moving through momentous changes (Alvarez, 2020).

2.5 Experiences of the academics

There has been a growing acceptance of information and communications technology worldwide amongst academics and in different workspaces alike, mainly due to the fact that information technology is seen as a means of streamlining operations in higher education (McNaught, 2002). Universities around the world have started to revise their strategies in order to adopt technologies that assist in achieving their pedagogical goals (Alharbi & Drew, 2014). With the emergence of the Covid-19 virus, academics across the globe had to examine their pedagogical practices; how they prepared lesson materials, how they interacted with students online, their infrastructure advancements such as new computers, software and connectivity tools, and their commitment to development in technological advancement (Flynn & Noonan, 2020).

Literature suggests that for many academics, the increasing emphasis on the use of computer technology for administration, research and teaching is highly threatening (McNaught, 2002). This view emanates from academics viewing the introduction of computer technology as a way to streamline their operations which could inevitably lead to the loss of jobs. There is also a general fear due to lack of sufficient support or training offered to academics to develop them and ensure a seamless transition from their normal way of teaching (McNaught, 2002). Jose et al. (2022) assert that training in computer related programs is important in developing the academics, and improving the quality of instruction in education. Furthermore, making these programmes more accessible to academics from different geographical locations, allows academics to interact with technology, while advancing themselves academically and creating innovative programmes that engage students. While digital technology is recognised as a tool to assist in the transmission of knowledge, (Castaneda & Selwyn, 2018) argue that it extends beyond being a learning tool, to economic, political, cultural, socialisation and qualification aspects. They further stress the interdependence of the use of technology and people's emotions and feelings thus finding its positionality within social relations (Gordy et al., 2022).

The impact of the pandemic on the wider education system, across all settings, has been profound, magnifying the inequalities borne by socioeconomic and generational differences which introduced many changes to teaching and learning (Zuo & Juve`, 2021). This involved a change in pedagogical approaches, particularly regarding how academics plan and design learning materials and lessons, how they interact with students, how they dealt with increases in workload, and their access to professional development (Kehrwald & McCallum, 2015).

From the literature studied, the academics' experiences can be broadly classified into five main themes, namely; a) Skills and Competencies b) Digital Divide c) Workload increase d) Social Pedagogy, and e) Technology Fatigue.

2.6 Skills and Competencies

Bozkurt et al. (2020) explains that academics who were generally not familiar with ICT use in teaching experienced a great deal of panic and spent a considerable amount of time preparing lectures after emergency remote education was first announced. A significant number of universities went as far as offering resources they had to help academics adapt to the technical

aspects of their new reality. Nonetheless, they could not completely prepare them for the pedagogical challenges that resulted from teaching remotely during a crisis (Gelles et al., 2020). Raheim (2020) adds that learning platforms such as Moodle, Zoom, Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp were of utmost importance to the academics, to maintain the interactions between students and themselves. Ali (2020) concurs that New York University Shanghai and Duke Kunshan University made successful adaptation and rapid deployment of educational technology products like the video-conferencing platforms Zoom and Moodle. The goal was to retain normalcy amid unusual circumstances, and continue to deliver teaching and learning through a variety of online platforms (Motala & Menon, 2020).

The pandemic highlighted the need for academics to be trained and become familiar in online pedagogies, as emergency remote teaching cannot be a replication of face-to-face pedagogies in digital form, owing to the differences in affordances between the two learning environments (Bozkurt et al., 2020). Another concern for the academics was the time needed to acquire the skills in using the technological resources and available resources (Crick et al., 2020). Many academics spent considerable amounts of time in platforming a series of learning activities using the thousands of freely available learning resources such as Zoom, You tube, Future Learn, Microsoft teams and Tencent meetings (the latter being widely used in Filipino) and providing support just delivering the best lectures (Mohmmed et al., 2020). The use of all the above learning resources revealed the significance of supporting institutions with adequate internet bandwidth, where it was yet to be provided, as many still needed it (Bozkurt et al., 2020). Thus, moving to ERT without the necessary workforce development and technological infrastructure can hinder the efficiency of online pedagogy.

Institutions were not evaluating the discipline specific challenges and supporting appropriate pedagogic approaches (Crick et al., 2020). Therefore, new lessons needed to be learnt in the pandemic, to effectively develop academics' skills in emergency remote teaching. The COVID-19 outbreak exposed a significant variation in academics' readiness to use technology to support learners at a distance (Trust & Whalen, 2020). Most academics seemed to be teaching online and using remote teaching strategies and tools. However, lack of preparation, training, and support for designing quality instruction with technology created further stressors and barriers to teaching and learning remotely in times of need (Trust & Whalen, 2020). This compromised the quality of the programmes designed by the academics, which hindered

teaching remotely in times of the pandemic. McNaught (2002) argues for the importance of supporting academics in terms of institutions offering academics upgraded infrastructure and technological tools, professional staff development, funding and grant schemes. The same is still valid to date as there is an increased demand for academics to use such technology. Mohmmed et al. (2020) also attest that staff development as a means of support is crucial in providing the required support for the utilisation of online tools for instructional delivery. This raises the need for bringing out a policy on online pedagogy, which seems to be the biggest miss in the current scenario.

Emergency remote teaching demanded that academics plan and design their lectures well in advance. Organising digital educational content to align with existing curricula can be critical in providing users and teachers with a way to ensure that the learning opportunities provided correspond to broader educational objectives within an education system (World Bank, 2020). With planning at the forefront, most of the work was done at home, in order to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus. A study with students pointed out that some academics were inexperienced in using technology, and that learning was delayed or slowed compared to faceto-face learning (Raheim, 2020). Some of the academics did not concur, as they saw this as an opportunity to engage in more technologies to enhance their lessons and increase student interaction and participation (Trust & Whalen, 2020). To safeguard student engagement, Ferri et al. (2020) further endorses that innovations in teaching methods are needed to engage students, and stimulate their proactive behaviour. It is evidently clear that there is need for postsecondary online learning expertise, and institutions need to cultivate this competence (Ali, 2020).

To ensure continuity of learning for any situation, and support learners across spatial and temporal boundaries, academics need to be fluent users of technology, creative and collaborative problem solvers, and adaptive socially aware experts throughout their careers (Trust & Whalen, 2020).

2.7 Digital divide

With many higher education institutions having shut down and academics and students alike having to move back to their hometowns, sufficient literature suggests that academics were faced with challenges pertaining to accessibility and connectivity to bandwidth, due to the

geographical divide (Raheim, 2020). The differences in geographic locations laid bare the digital divide, or what Boyd (2016) refers to as the "virtual inequality", which identifies those who have online access to resources and digital literacy and those who do not. The disparities caused by the digital divide, further hindered access to the educational institutions, more so, for South African students (Mpungose, 2020; Van Deursen & Van Dijk, 2019). Pokhrel and Chhetri (2021) highlight that many countries had substantial issues with reliable internet connections and access to digital devices. Compounding the problem of the digital divide (albeit to different extents) was insufficient bandwidth, producing delays or connection failures during lessons and video conferences (Ferri et al., 2020).

Academics were among those that encountered problems with internet connections, technical problems, and overloading of conference tools (Talidong, 2020). Further to these complications, some of the digital platforms accessed through varying bandwidth had slow communication because of overloading of the online site, considering the synchronised utilisation by a massive group of people. The majority of emergency remote education approaches have depended on access to the internet, in addition to data and devices, to provide continuation of teaching and learning (Bozkurt et al., 2020). Along with the inequalities in bandwidth distribution, high data prices and internet speed, there were socio-economic factors that further widened the digital divide. These were factors such as gender, age, employment, educational background, neighbourhood, and household income (Rohs & Ganz, 2015). Many ministries and some higher education institutions responded to the challenges by offering stipends or free data for educational purposes. They also worked with telecommunication providers to zero-rate educational content on websites (McBurnie et al., 2020; Heitz et al., 2020).

2.8 Social Pedagogy

Social pedagogy refers to care, affection and empathy required by academics during the time of the Covid-19 pandemic (Bozkurt et al., 2020). Research shows that emotions play a major role in the online learning experience, and deeper caring relationships were found to exist even more in the online than in face-to-face contexts (Cleveland-Innes & Campbell, 2012; Velasquez et al., 2013). Given the devastating impact of this global crisis, prioritising issues of care, empathy, and emotional/ psychological support should not be limited to the classroom setting

or only towards students, but also embodied in educational policy and decision-making that impact educators and staff as well (Bali, 2020).

Academics' ability to perform their role fully was affected by the adverse effects of COVID19, which made it difficult for them to offer support students (Gelles et al., 2020). Apart from the challenges brought on by the physical and social distance, the academics and students found it difficult to engage in online teaching and learning sessions at home (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). They dealt with distractions in the form of burdens of homework or childcare, which had an impact on the online learning and teaching process (Mohmmed et al., 2020). Thus, obtaining a suitable workspace for learning and teaching, due to difficult family backgrounds, hindered the education process. Pillay et al. (2021) found that students had difficulty finding a suitable learning environment, away from disturbances and overall dynamics and complexities in their homes, resulted in students not fulfilling their academic duties. Working from home also posed challenges such as caring for younger children who were also forced to attend school remotely, and taking on new roles and responsibilities, particularly for women (Wells, 2020; Nash & Churchill, 2020).

2.9 Academics and the pandemic

Stemming from the decreased human contact as a result of social distancing, academics were presented with an urgent need to be aware of the potential risks to their mental health and emotional well-being during ERT (Brereton, 2020). The continued impact of the pandemic brought about trauma and anxiety to the academics, which went unnoticed. Some academics felt that they were expected to "keep calm and carry on" as if it was business as usual (Motala & Menon, 2020). There were major changes to teaching methods effected such as, changing the kind of assignments or exams given, lowering expectations about student workload, allowing students to choose pass/ fail instead of a A-F grade for the semester (Shakeeb, 2020). Some academics revealed that many were experiencing high levels of anxiety and unpreparedness, uncertainty and concern around effective student engagement and success (Lederman, 2020 as cited in Shakeeb, 2020). There was also fear of deskilling and a sense of deprofessionalisation (Shakeeb, 2020), making evident the need for transformation of academics' mindset towards learning, teaching and assessment in the new age. Hlatshwayo (2020) reflects on these challenges and argues;

> With all the current challenges facing the public university during this lockdown period, teaching and learning is arguably central. Universities have begun to conceptualise teaching and learning as the 'dumping' of curriculum material online in an attempt to salvage what is increasingly becoming a lost academic year. The operating logic of this discourse of salvaging the academic year, is largely driven by the need to ensure that it is 'business as usual' at the university, and that the university calendar, its ceremonial traditions and norms cannot be disturbed, and should continue as normal, albeit online. This insistence on the reestablishment of 'normalcy' and its social order presents a couple of challenges. Firstly, it reduces the pedagogical shift to entail the mere *uploading* of material online. Secondly, it forfeits the social justice and critical engagement agenda that is often required when teaching and learning is concerned. Academics are now under pressure to upload as much material as they can online to claim that they had made curricula 'accessible', without firstly asking accessible to who? Whose agenda is being served by online teaching and learning?
>
> (Hlatshwayo, 2020, p.143).

In the above quotation, Hlatshwayo (2020) argues that academics have had to conceptualise new ways of teaching and getting the curriculum to its intended recipients. This meant overloading students with work by simply uploading materials online and thereby defeating the purpose of fruitful engagement with students. This raises the question of who was meant to benefit from the introduction of ERT, or whether it was meant to meet set targets or just a method of ticking boxes.

Flynn and Noonan (2020) identified the concept of emotional labour, which centres around the idea that academics experience emotional labour by engaging in caring relationships with their students. Academics also expressed anxiety over the well-being of students and their levels of engagement, in what is now a vastly different classroom setting than prior to the pandemic. Talidong (2020) underscores the importance of patience, determination, and persuasiveness as positive traits that academics should possess to be practical and positive amid the challenges of ERT. This allowed academics to employ a care approach which recognized the diversity of students' experiences and vulnerabilities, thus becoming more receptive to students assumed needs, as well as expressed and individual needs (Bozkurt et al., 2020). As a result of this, academics could not perform their role fully, in terms of providing affective support, showing compassion and care for students, as they were off campus and because of the physical and social distance (Gelles et al., 2020), and particularly since students were reported to be less

confident in this new environment (Flynn & Noonan, 2020). It is important to note that this can be exhausting, especially when teachers are under stress. It is no understatement to describe the COVID-19 pandemic as a traumatic experience, which deeply affected any individual's ability to function (Brereton, 2021). It would therefore, not be surprising if this led to an exacerbation of teachers' emotion labour, mental exhaustion, burnout, and depression (Jeung et al., 2018; King, 2016).

Noddings (2002) noted that "caring about" others is important in a moral society. It turns one's attention to the lives of others whom one does not know and will never know and will never meet. "Caring for" springs from the capacity to "care about" but occurs within ongoing face-to-face relationships, where one focuses attention intensely, experiences the issues, sees the consequences, and understands how one's caring affects others (Noddings, 2002). "Caring for" others entails attending to them in ways that encourage "goodness or ethical behaviour (Noddings, 2002 as cited in Shevalier & McKenzie, 2012).

2.10 On digital fatigue

Most academics were also faced with an uncommon challenge of digital/ technology fatigue, which Halupa and Bolliger (2020) refer to as technology-use related stress (technostress) and frequent change in technology (change fatigue). Technostress, which may also be referred to as technology overload, is defined as something that causes cognitive and physical burdens (Halupa & Bolliger, 2020) and can go as far as affecting physical health (Okonoda et al., 2017) due to overuse of multiple, complicated gadgets. Symptoms can include headaches, stiff shoulders, eyestrain, backaches, difficulty sleeping, and depression. Additional symptoms can include decreased productivity, dissatisfaction with work, fatigue, and anxiety (Marchiori et al., 2019). According to more recent research, this fatigue is known as digital fatigue (Alevizou, 2020); fatigue for constantly being required to be online and plugged in.

Digital fatigue is a result of flexible delivery of academic courses and degree programmes, where students experience an increased availability of academics (Halupa & Bolliger, 2020). Furthermore, most students expect academics to answer their e-mails or phone calls instantly, which increases digital fatigue. From their research, Flynn and Noonan (2020) mention that academics acknowledged the emotional demands of teaching online, and the need for help with the exhausting nature of giving classes online.

2.11 Opportunities during Emergency Remote Teaching

Emergency remote teaching not only presented challenges, but also some opportunities. Positive relationships were forged between students and academics, between academics and support staff, and even among academics, in an effort to navigate through the fast paced, highly evolving emergency remote teaching. There were incomparable opportunities for cooperation; creative solutions; willingness to learn from others and to try new tools; and sharing of experiences by academics, parents and students (Doucet et al., 2020). Academics also engaged in efforts to upskill themselves with technological skills, to successfully engage accordingly with students and peers alike.

One cannot only focus on the ERT experiences of academics without focusing on the students. Thus there is need for some insight from the literature on how students' themselves experienced and navigated the emergence of the ERT.

2.12 Students' experiences of ERT

Academics were faced with mixed experiences of ERT. Although the experiences were largely negative, there were some positive ones. The main challenge was that of student interactions, previously governed by the physical workspaces conducive to different ways of learning (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Students were reported to be less confident in this new environment. Statistically, 22% appeared confident when engaging online (Flynn & Noonan, 2020). Compounding to the challenge of student interactions, was the hinderance to the relationship between academics and students. Most academics were used to physical contact lessons and feedback from body language during conversations (Whittle et al., 2020) Furthermore, some academics indicated remote teaching initially hindered their social contact with learners, with initial interactions with students increasingly defined by the academic relationship (Whittle et al., 2020). This led to a sharp decline in student engagement with learning, with the academics and with other students. Another challenge was that academics could not perform their role fully, in terms of providing timeous feedback and affective support as students were off campus. Showing compassion, and care for students proved to be more difficult when there was physical and social distance (Gelles et al., 2020). Some student-teacher relationships developed positively with emergency remote learning, as it was easier to put a face to a name.

It was felt that a disconnect between the student and lesson was evident, and students lost concentration easily.

Sintema (2020) foresaw that the level of academic performance of students was likely to drop for the year-end examination due to reduced contact hours for students and lack of consultation with academics. Higher education institutions opted to do online assessments and examinations, which opened up various opportunities for students to attain their semester marks (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Furthermore, concerns were raised over how plagiarism would be controlled or managed due to the large numbers of students writing similar exams and possibly sharing responses (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Mahabeer and Pirtheepal (2019) note that academic dishonesty compromises the quality of teaching and learning processes, and undermines the credibility of the student, the academic, and the institution. Djajadikerta et al. (2021) indicate that academics resorted to using Turnitin to detect plagiarism, developing many different sets of examination papers, doing some initial check of student identification, in a bid to minimise the potential of students cheating. Such methods were not fully effective, and Mahabeer & Pirtheepal (2019) concede that such reports should be handled with caution as they may not always indicate genuine plagiarism. Furthermore, they note that the responsibility lies with the academic to evaluate the report and to decide the extent to which plagiarism has occurred, and whether plagiarism was intentional or accidental.

Among some of the concerns was the disadvantage that students from disadvantaged socioeconomic background had because of the lack of access to technology, which clearly had a negative impact on their academic achievement compared to their rich peers (Alhumaid, 2019). Pillay et al. (2021) note that South Africa has a low infrastructural starting point with deep digital divides which is manifested in the difference between students with high-end computers and those who do not have enough to eat. While students may have been ready for the paradigm shift towards online education, the remaining students had yet to adapt to the new normal (Daval, 2020) as cited in (Pillay, et al., 2021). This was therefore, a steep learning curve and an overload of information, especially for those who were not familiar or experienced in online learning and teaching, which could have negative impacts on students as they may have felt demotivated and discouraged (Liyanagunawardena, Williams, & Adams, 2013) as (cited in Bozkurt et al., 2020).

2.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The literature review discussed the challenges, opportunities and experiences of academics during the worldwide phenomenon of emergency remote teaching. More emphasis has been placed on the use of technology for the ERT to be successful. This involved academics upskilling themselves pedagogically, emotionally, and even to the extent of adopting technological skills to improve their online skills. Academics also had to become aware of social pedagogy that they needed to acquire to effectively "care for" and "care about" the students that they interact with virtually.

ERT forced academics to adopt flexible approaches to teaching, and dealing with curricula and the students they deliver the curriculum to. The various online strategies and tools made ERT more manageable, and it became beneficial, mostly to academics while trying to continue with the academic year. Engaging in the use of the digital tools will aid academics in future on related instances. There is, therefore, need to empower academics so that the devastating phenomenon such as the COVID-19 pandemic does not interrupt the continuity of learning, and they can navigate with ease through such cases.

Empowering academics also involves more staff development initiatives in institutions, mainly to provide technological skills for using digital tools. Upgrading the infrastructure or a complete overhaul of the technological infrastructure, and improvement in software to detect plagiarism and other unethical behaviour by students, would be beneficial.

Apart from the technological aspects of ERT, academics were presented with some harmful effects of using the tools, pointing to the need for the academics to safeguard themselves against these harmful effects. Although it was not noted as a major challenge, mental health and physical health was also affected by the excessive exposure to technology. Therefore, taking much-needed breaks and being "offline" is beneficial to prevent technology stress.

Literature pays little attention to the academics' experiences, yet they too, went through complex challenges during this uncertain time. Thus, looking closely at the academics' experiences was aimed at bringing to light methodologies, approaches and overall experiences. In this study, I explored their challenges with the aim of contributing to literature on the

academics' experiences, for policies to be drawn to further assist academics with similar challenges in future.

CHAPTER THREE
THEORETICAL FRAMINGS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I discussed and outlined the literature on academics' experiences of the emergency remote teaching. In this chapter, I discuss and provide a broad overview of the theoretical framework that informed this study. I first discuss the importance of theory in educational research; followed by the chosen theory of phenomenology, detailing its history; and lastly, the key concepts of phenomenology. To conclude the chapter, phenomenology in different contexts is highlighted from international and local perspectives.

3.2 THEORY IN RESEARCH

According to Gouthro (2019), theories are ideas that have been inducted into the discourses, or shared conversations of an academic discipline by researchers and scholars working within a particular community of practice. Collins and Stockton (2018) define theory as a "big idea" that organises many other ideas, with a high degree of explanatory power. They further suggest that it sheds light on observations and data that may be overlooked or misinterpreted. Collins and Stockton (2018) found that there is no definite distinction that can be made between theory and the theories that underpin methodological approaches, epistemological paradigms, or theoretical frameworks in qualitative research. These theories also aid in making sense of difficult social interactions and phenomena, while also helping in making explicit the sensemaking process. Theories are formulated to explain, predict, and understand phenomena, and in many cases, to challenge and extend existing knowledge within the limits of critical bounding assumptions (Walden, 2014).

Theories are the basis of theoretical frameworks in a field of inquiry, which is related and or reflects the hypothesis of a study (Adom et al., 2018). Put differently, this means that a theoretical framework lays the foundation of how a body of work can be investigated or looked at. This suggests that solid or formidable studies are underpinned by suitable theoretical frameworks. According to Grant and Osanloo (2014), a theoretical framework is a "blueprint or guide" for a research or study. Adom et al. (2018) further points out that:

> It is a blueprint that is often 'borrowed' by the researcher to build his or her own house or research inquiry. It serves as the foundation upon which a research is constructed.

Khanare (2012) suggests that a theoretical framework is needed in research because it explains why the research is done in a specific way. The theoretical framework selected for this study is Phenomenology. I now turn to discussing it in depth.

3.3 PHENOMENOLOGY

Phenomenology is rooted in philosophy and has been studied throughout history, in many different forms (Merriam, 2014). According to Husserl (1970), phenomenology can be defined as “the science of essence of consciousness”, and focuses on defining the concept of intentionality and the meaning of lived experience, from the first-person point of view. This means that Husserl's approach is mainly concerned with illuminating the experiences of individuals, concentrating on how that individual perceived or experienced a certain phenomenon (Lester, 1999).

Through the use of phenomenology, the researcher can describe the meanings of these unique experiences while excluding his or her previous judgements and knowledge (Husserl, 1970). The removal of previous knowledge and judgement helps the researcher arrive at descriptions of the lived experience that are full of meaning and depth. Using inceptual insight will evoke concrete richness and originary uniqueness of particulars (Van Manen, 2017), while also sensitively interpreting the primal meanings of humans. Simply put, the researcher must describe the experiences as new and unique experiences and refrain from comparing them to other known experiences. Flynn and Noonan (2020) argue that the goal of phenomenology is not to capture everything, but to describe the subjective character of experiences. It is these unique experiences that a researcher seeks to solicit from participants and arrive at credible understandings and insights. Through the successful use of phenomenology, which brings to the fore the experiences and perceptions of individuals, normative and structural assumptions can be challenged (Lester, 1999).

Creswell (2007, p.57) notes that "a phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their shared experiences of a concept or phenomenon". Finlay (2010) further argues that the goal of phenomenology is to describe the meaning of an experience in terms of what was experienced and how it was experienced; exploring it from the perspective of those

who have experienced it. Therefore, phenomenology is a powerful research framework that enables the researcher to appreciate the lived experiences of participants.

3.4 THE HISTORY OF PHENOMENOLOGY

The origins of phenomenology can be tracked back to the works of German thinkers like Emanuel Kant (1724 -1804), Friedrich Hegel (1770 – 1837), as well as French philosophers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1753 – 1778) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908 -1961). Most scholars regard Husserl as the founder of phenomenology, with Heidegger following as a major influence on its development (Mohamed, 2017). Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) was a German philosopher who “sought to develop a new philosophical method which would lend absolute certainty to a disintegrating civilization” (Eagleton, 1983, p. 54 cited in Groenewald, 2004). Vandenberg (1997 p. 11) regards Husserl as the “fountainhead of Phenomenology in the twentieth Century".

Giorgi (2007) states that the philosophical movement began through Husserl's publication of his logical investigations. According to Moustakas (1994), Husserl believed that the scientific empirical approach should not be applied to human subjects in Psychology, as different people attached meaning to external factors, and some people did not respond automatically. The phenomenological approach was therefore, a way of understanding the outside world as interpreted by Husserl, and through human consciousness; with an emphasis on “back to things themselves” (Mohamed, 2017). This means that Husserl promoted a movement away from science and understanding things naturally, "to things themselves", and to the evidence or the facts as they are given or present themselves. Reflecting on the lived experience of the everyday world of an individual was amongst the things that he strongly believed in. Phenomenology is the way people experience the world around them, and their interpretation of reality (Merriam, 2014). Langdridge (2007) suggests that transcendental phenomenology be linked to being able to go outside of the experience, as though you are standing outside of yourself, to view the world from a different angle.

Eddles-Hirsh (2015) considers Husserl as the founder of transcendental phenomenology, which refers to analysing the essences perceived by consciousness with regard to individual experiences (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). A transcendental phenomenological attitude is particularly useful to gain required precise descriptions or experiences, bring to consciousness an instance

of the phenomenon to be explored, and carefully describe the essence to be discovered (Giorgi, 2007). According to Qutoshi (2018), consciousness is central, and understanding the subjective consciousness is important. From this, it can be deduced that consciousness has some specific structures, which are gateways to direct knowledge through reflections (Qutoshi, 2018).

Husserl's transcendental phenomenology was referred to as transcendental as it was believed that it led researchers to transcend the phenomena and meanings being explored, to the global view of the essences discovered (Sheehan, 2014). Heidegger's perspective, in comparison to Husserl's, was that a researcher could not remove himself or herself from the phenomena and the essences, while also remaining neutral from the phenomena (Sheehan, 2014). Put differently, this refers to Heidegger's suggestion that things cannot be investigated purely based on how they appear, while the researcher remains neutral without adding his or her perspective to how they see that phenomenon (Langdridge, 2007). This, goes against Husserl's ideology of the researcher using their pre-suppositions to have an understanding of that particular phenomenon.

There are several types of phenomenology that overlap philosophy and methodology (Langdridge, 2007), but Padilla-Diaz (2015) identify two of the most common types, namely; descriptive phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology.

3.4.1 DESCRIPTIVE PHENOMENOLOGY

Husserl’s descriptive phenomenology, also known as transcendental phenomenology, is a theoretical approach that uses the technique of bracketing (Spinelli, 2005; Sloan et al*.,* 2014). Simply put, bracketing means to put aside all previous knowledge about the phenomenon, which is also known as epoché. Essentially, epoché in phenomenology aids one in looking beyond constructions, preconceptions and assumptions, to arrive at the essence of the experience being investigated. Descriptive or transcendental phenomenology is referred to in this way because the observer can transcend the phenomena and meanings being investigated to take a global view of the essences discovered (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). This means that there is an objectivisation of the meanings of human experiences (Smith et al., 2009), and focus on examining the essence of the experiences in the way that they occur to us naturally.

The transcendental researcher brings no definitions, expectations, assumptions or hypotheses to the study. Instead, the researcher assumes the position of a 'tabula rasa', a blank slate that uses participants' experiences to develop an understanding of the essence under study.

Mohamed (2017) argues that this "tabula rasa state" is achieved through a series of reductions. The first reduction is referred to as the transcendental stage. It requires the researcher to transcend from the natural attitude of everyday life through epoché or the process of bracketing. This is the process through which the researcher is required to set aside or bracket off his/ her past knowledge and assumptions about the phenomenon (Smith et al., 2018). The proponents of this approach strongly believe that epoché or bracketing off is the only way a researcher can explore and find the true transcendental experiences.

3.4.2 HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGY

Interpretive phenomenology is also known as hermeneutic phenomenology (Langdridge, 2007; Laverty, 2003) or existential phenomenology (Spinelli, 2005). Hermeneutics is the interpretation of text or language by an observer, and can be used as a methodology or an enhancement of phenomenology (Webb & Pollard, 2006), hence the alternative description of 'interpretive phenomenology'. The focus is on understanding the meaning of experience by searching for themes, and engaging with the data interpretively, with less emphasis on the essences that are important to descriptive phenomenology (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Hermeneutic phenomenology also steers away from formalising a certain method on how data should be analysed (Langdridge, 2007).

In later years, Van Manen (2017) developed the hermeneutic approach to focus more on how language can help to interpret the lived experiences of participants under study. The researcher moves in the 'hermeneutic circle', between part of the text and the whole of the text, to establish truth by discovering phenomena and interpreting them (Langdridge, 2007). The hermeneutic circle is thus, a process used to understand the individual parts of the text from interviews, along with the researchers' understanding of each individual part, with reference to the whole document (Sloan & Bowe, 2014).

In this study, I used Husserl's descriptive phenomenology. I recognised that the academics' experiences, their feelings, and thoughts cannot be separated from the phenomenon of emergency remote teaching. I, therefore, used phenomenology as a lens to look into, and

appreciate the academics' experiences and how their lives and work are interconnected with these experiences.

3.5 CONCEPTUAL TOOLS FROM PHENOMENOLOGY

To acquire a conceptual and theoretical understanding of phenomenology, a researcher needs to clearly distinguish and understand the key concepts that underpin the philosophy of phenomenology. These key concepts can be identified as life world, intentionality, noesis noema, and epoché/bracketing.

3.5.1 LIFE WORLD/LIVED EXPERIENCE

Husserl, as the leading thinker in phenomenology, initially distinguished the common key concept of the "life world". The lifeworld refers to the world of lived experience, inhabited by conscious beings (Brooks, 2015). Put differently, lifeworld entails the different experiences of individuals when they are fully aware of their surroundings and what goes on around them. Van Manen (2017) interprets phenomenological research and inquiry as turning back to "what matters in lived or primal experience." He further emphasises the significance of the phenomenon appearing in consciousness, lending itself to the idea of the "lived experience".

According to Bengtsoon (2013), the lifeworld is widely used in empirical research where both the participants being studied, and the researchers are inseparable from their life worlds. Ultimately, one cannot differentiate or separate the participants and the researcher from their experiences, such that they become 'one' with their lifeworld. Husserl (2001) also conceptualised life world as pre-reflective, because it focuses on what we perceive, rather than how it is perceived. He considered phenomenology as reflecting the human experience in which the researcher investigates the nature of the phenomenon (Van Manen, 2017). Other than concentrating on perceptions only, Buttimer (1976) also recognised that lived experience involves not only cognitive understanding, but also organic and sensory foundations, which precede intellectual knowledge. From this, the researcher can then ask simple questions about the experience, to arrive at an understanding of the meaning of the lived world.

According to Zelic (2008), four distinctions of the term "world" can be made to capture a certain aspect of the phenomenological meaning of the lifeworld. These were:

- The world of scientific objectivity

- The world of perceptual objectivity
- The world of specialized pre-scientific interests
- The lifeworld in the strict phenomenological sense

To briefly explain the above distinctions, I commence with the world of scientific objectivity, which applies to how an individual logically and mathematically approaches ideal objects. Specifically, that the individual considers their logical thoughts about ideal objects true before the possibility of scientific thinking takes place. This governs the way in which the individual perceives their experiences of the lived world. The second distinction of the world of perceptual objectivity consists of objects of definite shape, sizes and qualities because their values do not vary and show consistency. This pertains to objects as they were actually perceived, making the lifeworld the pre-objective world of perception.

In the world of specialised pre-scientific interests, an object is constructed or perceived through different senses, defined in terms of different specialised worlds. Thus, the lifeworld is the totality of the worlds of specialised interests. Simply put, the world was seen through an individual's specialist vocational field, for example as an academic, student, architect, and so forth. Then with the lifeworld in phenomenology, the concept of bracketing or epoché makes explicit what is not acknowledged in natural conceptions of the world, by disclosing the lifeworld as a stratum of the priori structures of transcendental subjectivity. The lifeworld is brought to light by transcendental subjectivity, which was elucidated by ambiguous intentional meanings of the term priori of the lifeworld. The lifeworld exists in a sphere of social and cultural practice, and perceptual interests and activities. Therefore, the core of perceptual cognition in lifeworld is deeply rooted in action, communication, and evaluation.

Furthermore, Husserl identifies that, as the lifeworld is inseparable from the method of reduction or bracketing, so is the human attitude towards the world. Husserl argues that:

> I am conscious of the world endlessly spread out in space, endlessly becoming and having endlessly become in time. I am conscious of it: that signifies, above all, that intuitively I find it immediately, that I experience it…. Along with the ones now perceived, other actual objects are there for me as determinate, as more or less known, without being themselves perceived or, indeed, present in any other mode of intuition (Christensen et al., 2017)

Finlay (2012) points out that life world is a blended approach that explores how daily experiences manifest in the lives of individuals through consideration of selfhood, sociality, embodiment, temporality, and spatiality. Bengtsson (2013) further argues that differentiated understandings of the lifeworld were provided by scholars such as Heidegger, who stressed the practical and historical dimension of the lifeworld; Merleau-Ponty, who emphasised its embodiness; and Schutz, its social dimensions. These may be seen as belonging to the existential way that humans experience the world (Van Manen, 2017). According to Van Manen (2017), the aspects of selfhood, sociality, embodiment, temporality and spatiality are important in understanding people's lived experiences, especially their meaning of health/stress, their coping mechanisms, and their quality of life within the phenomena. A researcher, therefore, identifies the participants' emotions, thoughts and indicators of stress or anxiety, triggered by emergency remote teaching. Lifeworld can then be seen as the way in which participants experience everyday occurrences in the world. For this study focus is on the way in which the academics experience emergency remote teaching.

3.5.2 INTENTIONALITY

According to Christensen et al. (2017, p116), intentionality is originally conceived from Brentano, who developed the work from middle ages scholastic philosophy, stating that intentionality calls the individual to become 'intentional' (psychical) with the world. For example, when they experience something, that experience has meaning or an 'about-ness' or directedness of consciousness towards an object. Intentionality, therefore, means the human mind's ability to refer to objects outside of itself (Christensen et al., 2017). Husserlian's intentionality suggests that there is an inner and outer perception (physical and mental phenomena) for the naïve man. This distinguishes between external objects and perception of self.

McIntyre and Smith (1989, p1) note that:

> a characteristic feature of our mental states and experiences, is especially evident in what we commonly call being "conscious" or "aware". As conscious beings, or persons, we are not merely affected by the things in our environment; we are also conscious of these things – of physical objects and events, of our own selves and other persons, of abstract objects such as numbers and propositions, and of anything else we bring before our minds. Many, perhaps most, of the events that make up our mental life – our perceptions, thoughts, beliefs, hopes,

> fears, and so on – have this characteristic feature of being “of” or “about” something and so giving us a sense of something in our world.

The above quote explains that intentionality is about being intentional in ones' actions, doing things with an intention of achieving a certain goal in mind. For this study, intentionality would mean to intentionally seek an understanding of the academics' experiences of the emergency remote teaching. Eddles-Hirsh (2015) also explains that the concept of intentionality incorporates the concepts of noema and noesis explained below.

3.5.3 NOEMA-NEOSIS

According to Rassi and Shahabi (2015) Noema is taken from the Greek word of Nous. This term is applied for referring to mind and intellect and meaning an act. The Noesis root is the Greek verb of Nosin, and means to comprehend, ascertain and ruminate. Husserl considers Noesis as giving stratum of experience. Noesis gives meaning to intentional act, and Noema is a meaning given to intentional act. Cilesiz (2011) explains that noema refers to the object of the action such as the perceived, the felt, the thought, the remembered, the judged; while noesis refers to the act of experience- such as perceiving, feeling, thinking, remembering or judging. Together, noema and noesis make up the conscious, which constitutes the perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and judgements of an experience. Therefore, when looking at a particular phenomenon, there is an attempt to make meaning of that phenomenon. The concept of noema aided me, as the researcher, to uncover the meaning of the phenomenon under study; emergency remote teaching. This was done by capturing what the academics involved felt about the phenomenon, what they remembered about it, and their perceptions of it overall.

The concept of 'Neosis' refers to the experience of that phenomenon, and how the academics perceived or experienced the ERT. As Husserl argues, there is no neomatic moment without a neomatic moment, and so, experiences of the academics cannot be regarded as separate from the phenomenon. As the researcher, I had to fully engage with the phenomenon in order to understand the experiences of academics related to emergency remote teaching.

3.5.4 EPOCHÉ / BRACKETING

Bracketing is a fundamental term in transcendental phenomenological research that encompasses the scientific process in which a researcher suspends or holds in abeyance, his or

her presuppositions, biases, assumptions, theories, or previous experiences, in order to see and describe the phenomenon (Gearing, 2004). In this study, bracketing is also interchangeably referred to as epoché or reduction. Gearing (2004) further likens bracketing to that used in mathematics, where one focuses only on the terms in the brackets and suspends anything that lies outside of the brackets. Husserl's later work was further interpreted to enable the:

> process of bracketing to refer not to the turning away of the world and a concentration on detached consciousness but to a resolve to set aside theories, research propositions, ready-made interpretations, etc., in order to reveal engaged, lived experiences (Ashworth, 1999, p.708).

The basic method of phenomenological analysis consists of the epoché and the reduction—finding the open space for phenomenological reflection—but the epoché and the reduction (no matter how the openness and reflection are understood), cannot be folded 'nicely' into a qualitative programme of determinable strategies, calculative schemes, codes and inventive analytic and synthesizing technicalities, that will produce or conveniently deliver some original thoughts or creative insights (Van Manen, 2017). The process of bracketing is particularly useful for the researcher to enable him/ her to put aside all knowledge of the phenomenon being explored or investigated, that is not due to the actual instance of this phenomenon (Giorgi, 2007). This allows the information gathered on the phenomenon to unravel, and aids in analysing it without preconceptions or personal bias (Wojnar, 2007). However, given that the basis of pure phenomenology is the examination of the thing itself, thoughtful focus and the careful examination of experience in the way it occurs to participants is an essential process (Langdridge, 2007). It is almost impossible for the researcher to completely remove his/ her bias in any research as he/she is part of the world and not bias-free.

According to Gearing (2004), bracketing comprises three general but distinct phases. Within each phase, there exists core elements made up of different components. The researcher's theoretical orientation, questions, focus, and emphasis will determine the composition of these elements, and ultimately dictate the type of bracketing. The three phases of bracketing are: (a) abstract formulation, (b) research praxis, and (c) reintegration. During the abstract formulation two elements can be considered, namely; the orientation standpoint and theoretical framework. Orientation standpoint is made up of two components; the researchers' epistemological position and their ontological perspective. The second element, the theoretical framework, reflects the qualitative theory guiding the researcher in that specific study (Gearing, 2004). It is evident

that the researcher's orientation and theoretical approach influence the entire research protocols, method, and analysis of any investigation. This phase determines the entry that the researcher takes into his/ her study with well thought out methods to be used throughout the study. Thus, clarity is required on which type of bracketing will be utilised in a study going forward.

The second phase of bracketing; research praxis, encapsulates the core elements of bracketing practised in qualitative research, and consists of the following five fundamental elements: foundational focus, internal (researcher) supposition, external (phenomenon) supposition, temporal structure, and parenthesis (boundary) composition. These core elements focus on how bracketing is used in a study. The final element in the research praxis phase is parenthesis (boundary) composition. Parenthesis composition has three basic divisions; ideal, natural, or designed. Here, the researcher determines how rigid, specific, or porous the bracketing boundaries are to be in keeping out and/ or suspending the suppositions (Gearing, 2014). Traditionally, the parenthesis' composition is left undefined, frequently leaving the reader to assume its structural nature.

Heidegger argues that "consciousness is a product of the historical context from which it arises and in turn, one can never approach the study in a presuppositionless form" (Langdridge, 2007, p. 13). Therefore, no researcher can enter a study from a position of no presuppositions or without prior knowledge of the phenomenon. Therefore, human understandings between two individuals interacting are possible. This is due to the existence of complex human relationships between individuals.

3.6 PHENOMENOLOGY IN CONTEXT

In a transcendental phenomenological study carried out by Eddles-Hirsh (2015) in Australia on the evaluation of gifted learners, the researcher explains that she chose the transcendental research approach because she was interested in the lived experiences of the gifted learners who were attending schools, specifically for learners with unique academic needs. The study was aimed at describing the gifted child's experience from their own perspective, as opposed to describing the experience from an outsider's perspective, in this case the academic. She further explains how the phenomenological approach chosen helped her to get rich, in-depth descriptions of the gifted learner's lifeworld through the processes, such as epoché. Epoché or

bracketing aided her in achieving an understanding of how these gifted primary aged Australian learners negotiated their way in the specialised school setting. Much of how the study was organised and analysed was based on Moustakas and Giorgi's (1985) qualitative adaptation of the Husserlian transcendental phenomenological approach. However, the researcher included some of her own modifications to the research method.

The researcher randomly selected participants who had experienced the phenomenon being researched, and were willing to do tape recorded interviews. For this particular study, 27 participants were chosen from each schools' extension classes to offer in-depth, yet sufficiently different, experiences of the phenomenon being studied. These students were especially experienced in the school settings that actively sought to cater for their atypical academic needs. The researcher made use of in-depth interviews carried out in the participants' school. The questions used were open-ended to give the participants room to voice their own thoughts and opinions of their life in that particular school setting. The researcher further utilised bracketing throughout the interview process to optimally gain information from the participants' perspectives.

Another study was done by Erichsen et al. (2010) in Sweden, utilising phenomenology as a methodology to evaluate nurses' truth telling and honesty when providing information on terminal illnesses diagnosis or prognosis. The study was conducted on nurses giving honest information to help patients understand palliative care. The researcher chose the phenomenological method aimed at specifically understanding consciousness and subjectivity (Giorgi, 2007). Intentionality was used specifically to achieve consciousness of the phenomenon, while bracketing helped to set aside all previous misconceptions and presuppositions that the researcher had prior to the study.

The 12 participants in this study were purposively chosen from two different hospitals with about 400 000 patients. Consent forms were signed and permission to do the interviews acquired. The university ethics committee also assured participants of their confidentiality and anonymity in writing. The participants were reminded that participation was voluntary, and they could leave at any moment if they felt any of the conditions were compromised. Open interviews were carried out with follow up questions and were tape recorded to be transcribed and analysed at a later stage.

In a descriptive phenomenology study by Hall et al. (2016), the researcher explored how teachers described their experience with nutrition education. This study was approved by the University of Nebraska and the school district in which the school lies. The study was aimed at combating childhood obesity by offering nutritional education to teachers. The participants were purposively sampled, based on how they experienced the phenomenon of delivering classroom-based nutrition education. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten teachers who provided nutrition education in their classrooms. Observations and document analysis were also done.

The main aim of using phenomenology for me as the researcher, was to describe, interpret and understand the person's experience. I applied purposive sampling in the study because I needed participants who had experienced ERT and had the suitable knowledge that would add to the valuable data that was generated. The participants were invited to participate in the study through their institution emails to ensure they are received by the intended persons. Each of the participants signed an informed consent agreement, which stipulated clauses of confidentiality pertaining to the data obtained.

3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, I began with a definition of phenomenology and detailed the history of phenomenology. Thereafter, I discussed the key characteristics of phenomenology and explained them according to the literature I reviewed. I further identified, in detail, the advantages and disadvantages of using different phenomenological approaches. Moreover, I identified some international and local studies where the phenomenological approach was used, and how phenomenology was used and explained in these contexts. In the following chapter, I introduce the research methodology that was employed in this study, and how phenomenology assisted in gathering data.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I focused on the theoretical framings of the study. As suggested by the title, in this chapter I focus on the research methodology that I utilised in this study. I particularly outline the research methods, research approach (qualitative study), research design (case-study), methods of data generation (semi-structured interviews), the selection of the participants (purposive sampling), the type of data analysis, the ethical considerations and the limitations of the study. I end the chapter with some reflections and conclusions on the academics' experiences of the emergency remote teaching.

4.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Kothari (2004) defines research as a scientific and systematic search for pertinent information on a specific topic. The purpose of research is to discover answers to questions through the application of scientific procedures. Scientific procedures involve thorough investigation of hidden concepts, which may not have been discovered.

This study, being largely qualitative in nature, utilised research methods that detailed the participants' lived experiences, emotions and meanings they attached to them, without bias, prejudice, and/ or generalisation; to serve the purpose of the research objectives. Babbie and Mouton (2007) are of the view that research design is a plan or structured framework of how one intends conducting the research process in order to solve the research problem. Research methodology can be seen as an attempt at finding out how research is carried out and how social scientists go about finding out information about human life (Naicker, 2016). Kothari (2004) is of the opinion that research methods are the strategies, processes or techniques utilised in the collection of data or evidence for analysis, in order to uncover new information or create a better understanding of a topic. This section explains how the study was conducted and the research approach used during data collection and its analysis thereof.

4.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), a qualitative study is a broad class of empirical procedures designed to describe and interpret the experiences of research participants in a context-specific setting. Qualitative research is a means of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.

Methodological practices in research are influenced by the set of beliefs and practices that guide a particular field, known as paradigms (Morgan, 2007). According to Salvador (2016), a paradigm is a shared worldview that represents the beliefs and values in a discipline, and that guides how problems are solved. This study is underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm, which focuses on meanings, and attempts to understand the context and totality of each situation through a variety of qualitative methods (Mouton, 2004). The epistemology of this tradition focuses on the relative nature of knowledge, and understands that knowledge is created, interpreted and understood from a social as well as an individual perspective. As such, this paradigm seeks to explain the participant's behaviour from their individual viewpoint, as opposed to viewing them as passive actors dictated to by the situation in which they find themselves. The participants in an interpretive method are seen as active agents who are autonomous and able to create their social reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). In essence, this paradigm portrays the reality of peoples' experiences, and how they interpret those experiences in their environments in order to give in-depth information of a context. This study focused on exploring academics' experiences of the emergency remote teaching in South African higher education.

According to McQueen (2002), interpretivists view the world through a "series of individual eyes", and choose participants who have their own interpretations of reality "to" understand their worldview. The interpretivist paradigm enables the researcher to understand the world, while he or she possesses awareness of the fundamental nature of the social world using his or her experience subjectively (Gunbari & Sorm, 2018). Kelly et al. (2017) views ontology as pertaining to how reality can be understood, and epistemology as addressing how knowledge is created; and sees them as being of utmost importance in understanding the data that is collected. However, Welford et al. (2011), and Weaver and Olson (2006) argue that the ontological stance reflects one's lived experience, cultural influence, and meaning; while

acknowledging the potential for multiple realities. The ontological stance is particularly useful for this phenomenological study, as it shows how the reality of the lived experience of the participants will be understood. This stance also brings to the fore the possibility of multiple realities, which exists at the data gathering stage, as a result of the different experiences encountered by the different participants. Rahi (2017) asserts that the interpretive paradigm develops a deep understanding of a concept, in this case, how the academics' experienced emergency remote teaching and to attempt to explore how they understand the world in which they live, while navigating the new technologies and teaching strategies ERT brings. This suggests that the knowledge gained from the different perspectives will be culturally driven as well as historically situated (Chilisa et al., 2015). As Denzin and Lincolin (2003) suggest, this paradigm is steered by a set of views, beliefs and opinions on the world, and how they should be interpreted and studied. That understanding assisted me in developing subjective meanings of my participants' experiences, leading to the emergence of different perspectives from the participants about the phenomenon. In my study, the interpretivist paradigm is largely suitable because it helps me pay attention to participants' perspectives of the emergency remote teaching, largely focusing on their feelings and how they made meaning of emergency remote teaching. This enabled me to reflect on and paint a vivid picture of, their experiences while navigating emergency remote teaching during the pandemic.

4.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

The qualitative research approach was considered most appropriate for this study. This approach is one which draws on constructivist perspectives in the form of multiple meanings, in an attempt to describe the occurrences and reach some sound understanding (Creswell, 2012). This approach helps the researcher to understand the physical environment of the study. In this study, the qualitative research approach was most appropriate because it examines human behaviour and habits. Della and Keating (2008) further explain that the qualitative approach aims at understanding the events by discovering the meanings that human beings attribute to their behaviour and the world at large. The study explores education academics' experiences of emergency remote teaching from one South African university, generating qualitative data that addresses personal opinion and judgment (Shuttleworth, 2008). The qualitative research design was adopted in this study because it sought to provide a reflective description. The qualitative approach is useful to find out how people think or feel (McLeod,

2008). In this study, I explored participants' real-life situations during and beyond the Covid19 pandemic.

As this study took the form of a case study, I allowed for the different perspectives and anticipated diverse responses from the participants, as these were their social constructions of their reality of emergency remote teaching.

4.5 CASE STUDY DESIGN

This was a case of academics' experiences of emergency remote teaching in a South African higher education institution located in KwaZulu Natal. The use of this design is primarily informed by the interpretive paradigm and the use of the qualitative research approach. As the study was informed by the interpretive paradigm, it also employed the humanistic approach, which sought to answer questions of "why and how", which are humanistic in nature (Marshall, 1996). The use of case studies brings about understanding of complex issues through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events and their relationships. Shuttleworth (2015) describes a case study as an in-depth study of a particular situation. Yin (1981a, 1981b, 1994) notes that a case study as an empirical inquiry investigating a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within the real-life context. This means the researcher would seek in depth understanding of a phenomenon, while taking into the consideration the contextual conditions in which the phenomenon took place.

Yin (1994) and Stake (2005) have categorised case studies as explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive. Stake (2005) further adds that case studies are instrumental, collective or intrinsic, depending on the user. Baxter and Jack (2008) explains these three categories. An explanatory case study is used to explain presumed causal links in real life that are often complex for surveys or experimental strategies. An exploratory case study is a type of case study used to explore situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes. The descriptive case study is used to describe a phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurs. Considering these differences between and among the different types of case studies, I used a descriptive exploratory case study to highlight and explore the phenomenon and better understand it.

Creswell et al. (2007, p.245), best captures the concepts of a case study in the following definition:

> Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audio visual material and documents and reports) and reports a case description and case-based themes.

Stake (2006) identifies multiple sources of evidence and methods of data generation and analysis, with the most commonly used being interviews and observations. This is where the researcher positions himself/ herself in partnership with the participants for discovering and generating knowledge. Both direct interpretations and categorical or thematic grouping of findings are used. Since Stake (1995) and Yin (1994) consider interviews as the most important form of gathering case study data, I specifically made use of semi-structured interviews aimed at collecting the lived experiences, thoughts, perceptions and meanings of academics' experiences of emergency remote teaching.

Leedy and Ormrod (2010) understand a case study as a type of qualitative research in which in-depth data are gathered relative to a single individual, programme, or event; for the purpose of learning more about an unknown or poorly understood phenomenon. Through the in-depth data gathered, I was able to provide rich descriptions of the data to capture the various perspectives of the academics. Merriam (1998) and Geertz (1973) see thick descriptions as being systematically analysed, and yielding valuable understanding and explanation of a process. Crabtree and Miller (1999) highlight an advantage of the case study approach, which is the close collaboration between the researcher and the participant, while enabling participants to tell their story (Baxter, 2008). The case study design was chosen to provide insight on the "feelings" of academics with regards to emergency remote teaching, the strategies used to navigate through unchartered waters, and the skills acquired during remote teaching in the time of the pandemic. Creswell (2009) asserts that a case study is useful when examining an existing phenomenon, which can be termed as a real-life situation.

According to Noor (2008), case studies have been criticised by some researchers as lacking scientific rigour and reliability, and not addressing the issues of generalisation. However, using case studies can be advantageous as they do a holistic inquiry by looking at the process or

practice, the interaction within such a process, and the meaning of such interaction for a more generic understanding of the case under study (Njie & Asimiran, 2014). Yin (2003) mentions that approaching case studies with openness and acceptance of their main trait of focus on the unit is also advantageous. This helps to understand the unit and its behaviour patterns, thus deepening our understanding of their descriptions of an event.

As case studies are anchored in real life and have the ability to provide rich detailed accounts of the phenomenon under study, the teaching methods that enhance deep learning helped illuminate and provided in-depth data for this study (Shuttleworth, 2015; Yin, 2009). Using case study as an approach enabled me to work in a bounded context (Creswell, 2012), i.e. emergency remote teaching, and the context based in one research intensive university in KwaZulu Natal. The case study design allowed me to gain concrete in-depth knowledge within the context of emergency remote teaching. Furthermore, by conducting my study in this way, I received a range of perspectives from which emanated a greater understanding, while also reducing the potential of being biased towards the phenomenon. This was in line with what was highlighted in chapter three, in the conception of phenomenology, which requires the researcher to use bracketing and removing any preconceptions about the phenomenon.

4.6 SAMPLING OF PARTICIPANTS

Rahi (2017) defines sampling as a process of selecting a segment of the population for investigation. Creswell (2014, p. 143) describe "a sample is a group of people, objects, or items that are a representative of the population taken for measurement or examination." Sampling is used by researchers when it is impossible to test every single individual in the population (Sanap, 2017). A population refers, not only to a number of people, but also refer to total quantity of the things or cases, which are the subject of our research (Etikan et al., 2016).

According to Etikan et al. (2016), there are two common types of sampling methods, namely; probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling, also known as random sampling, is a sampling scheme in which the probability of choosing each individual is the same, or where each individual has a similar chance of being chosen. Non-probability sampling is totally based on judgement, where the researcher knows that the sample chosen is not entirely representative of the entire population. Etikan and Bala (2017) further detail the different types of non-probability sampling to include quota sampling, accidental sampling,

purposive sampling, expert sampling, modal instant sampling, and heterogenous sampling. Probability sampling includes systematic sampling, stratified sampling, cluster sampling, multi-stage and area sampling. In this study, I used purposive sampling, which is a type of nonprobability sampling. Purposive sampling is a method where participants are chosen by the researcher for the purpose a researcher has an interest in, and where the participants have the potential to help the researcher achieve their research purpose (Tongco, 2007). This sampling technique was specifically chosen because it allowed me to choose the participants according to their unique set of skills and knowledge of the phenomenon under study (Etikan et al., 2016). Over and above the participants' skills and knowledge, they had to meet practical criteria, of being easily accessible, available at a predetermined time, willingness to participate, as well as access to technological devices and reliable network connection. (Olivier, 2006).

According to Creswell (2012), a sample is a group of people, objects, or items that are a representative of the population, which is taken for measurement or examination. Thus, I chose a smaller and more manageable sample to do my research in greater depth. It consisted of 12 academics diverse in terms of age, race, gender and discipline background. The participants in this research project were academics from one university. The sample was purposively constructed to include diversity with respect to age, race, gender, language and discipline background. The research project employed semi-structured interviews to get into the professional spaces of these academics, capture their experiences, describe their networks, and make sense of themselves and the role that emergency remote teaching has on their daily professional life.

4.7 METHOD OF DATA GENERATION

Qualitative research involves using a variety of data generation methods. Creswell (2012) explains that the qualitative study uses data generation methods such as interviews, document analysis, reflections, and observations. This study utilised one method to generate data; semi-structured interviews. The individual sessions with the participants were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis during the data analysis stage.

4.7.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

In accordance with the interpretive paradigm that underpinned this study, the main data generating tool was the semi-structured interviews. Interviews are frequently utilised in the journey of generating data for research, and the semi-structured interviews are the most used interview method in research of a qualitative nature (Kallio et al., 2016). Creswell (2014) explains that they usually have a set of key questions that are followed in a more open-ended manner, or interview guides that list broader questions to be covered during the interview. Having a set of key questions means that the participants are asked the same questions, in the same order; leading to a systematic analysis of the data (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). The flexibility of semi-structured interviews offers the qualitative researcher the advantage of being able to modify their line of inquiry, to follow up interesting responses, and to investigate underlying motives; allowing for a more in-depth understanding (Creswell, 2014). The custom flexibility of these interviews also allows the participants to respond freely to questions due to their open-ended nature.

Semi-structured interviews were taken as an appropriate instrument to use for a small sample such as that selected in this study. This type of interview allowed me to remain in control of the topic, and participants to freely give subjective responses (Cohen et al., 2011; McIntosh & Morse, 2015). McIntosh and Morse (2015) further identify different types of semi-structured interviews namely; descriptive/ confirmative, descriptive/ corrective, descriptive/ interpretive, and descriptive/divergent. Descriptive/ confirmative aim at confirming the objective knowledge of the interviews frame. The descriptive/confirmative interview is meant to interpret the differences in the communicated experience and the actual experience of the participants. The descriptive/ interpretive type is typified by research with the aim of discovering the experiential world of the participant within the phenomenon. This interview type largely depends on subjective knowledge for its expansion, where the limited knowledge is expanded by the perspectives of the participants. Some argue, however, that the participants' perspectives may counter the frame and give rise to new categories, themes and hypotheses, which help in understanding the experiences of the participants. The descriptive/ divergent type advantages the interviewee or participant, and distinguishes their contrasting perspectives and experiences.

The descriptive/ interpretive semi-structured interviews were primarily employed for this study to elicit the different perspectives of the participants, thereby expanding my research objectives

in exploring the academics' experiences of the emergency remote teaching during Covid-19. The interviews were done virtually with the participating academics, to keep with Covid-19 social distancing regulations. The Zoom online or virtual platform was used to conduct the virtual interviews. The interview sessions were anticipated to last an hour. However, due to the open-ended nature of the interviews, flexibility with the time was allowed. All virtual interviews were recorded and transcribed because audiotapes provided a more accurate rendition of the interview. In the table below, I give a broad profile of the research participants.

TABLE 1: PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Name[1]	**Race**	**Gender**	**Discipline background**	**Highest qualification**
Sindisiwe	Black	Female	Languages (Isizulu)	PhD
Sizwe	Black	Male	Languages (IsiZulu)	PhD
Priyanka	Indian	Female	Early Childhood Development	PhD
Kagiso	Black	Male	Curriculum Studies	MEd
Palesa	Black	Female	Curriculum Studies	MEd
Kevin	Indian	Male	Computer Studies	PhD
Elizabeth	Indian	Female	Early Childhood Development	PhD

4.8 DATA ANALYSIS

After the researcher has generated data during the field work, it needs to be analysed so that findings will be derived. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2004), data analysis means a close or systematic study of data or separation of a whole into its parts, for the purpose of the study. Lisa (2002) sees data analysis as a body of methods that helps to describe facts, detect patterns, develop explanations, and test hypothesis. There are many ways a researcher can employ to analyse data e.g., qualitative or quantitative, just to name two. In analysing the generated data, qualitative data analysis methods were used. Thematic analysis methods were used, aimed at identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Thematic

[1] These are not their real names; these are pseudonyms as per ethical considerations and the need to protect the identity of the research participants.

analysis is a method for "identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Rahman, 2017). This formed the basis from which the set of data, mainly virtual interviews, were analysed. Another purpose for the use of thematic analysis was to organise and describe data sets in detail. Thematic analysis goes beyond simply counting phrases or words in a text, and moves on to identifying implicit and explicit ideas within the data, which aided the researcher in developing the key facets within the mental space, that forms and shapes academics' perspectives.

The analysis of the recorded data from the virtual interviews took place, replaying the recordings to ensure clarity. Data generated was then organised to facilitate analysis for my research questions. Coding of the data, according to the four emerging themes as mentioned, was done. After the analysis of the virtual interviews, I proceeded to classifying the different themes that would answer the research questions of the study. Perceptions and understandings were all analysed accordingly, and then used to create an understanding of what it is like to experience emergency remote teaching for academics. The interpretive phenomenological approach was thereafter, employed to analyse the data generated to understand how academics experience this phenomenon under study, and what the group of people felt during the phenomenon.

4.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness is referred to as the level at which the study can be trusted. As my study falls under the interpretivist paradigm, trustworthiness was an important component as opposed to the other paradigms focusing on validity of the study. Trustworthiness must be explained in this research study in terms of what it is, what it included, and how it was ensured. Trustworthiness is synonymous with standards of truth and value in the work presented. According to Guba and Lincoln (2003), four issues of trustworthiness are vital in any qualitative research. These are credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. The reason behind working with trustworthiness in a qualitative study is to support the views of the research, and to what extent they can be trusted and relied on. Trustworthiness, in this regard, is the relations between the avenue of generating data and the manner in which the data generated is recorded accurately.

4.9.1 CONFIRMABILITY

One of the trustworthiness concerns in qualitative research is that of confirmability, which is taken to mean that the findings are a depiction of the participants' answers to the questions asked, and not the interpretations of the researcher (Polit & Beek, 2012). To keep up with the concerns of confirmability, the transcribed findings from the semi-structured interviews were taken back to the participating academics, for them to check and verify that the responses were a true reflection of what they had said, and had not been influenced by my biases as a subjective human being.

4.9.2 CREDIBILITY

Credibility is the confidence we have on the data (Amankwaa, 2016, p. 121). It is the truthfulness of the data or the resemblance of the viewpoints of participants (Cope, 2014). Credibility is placed on the question of how believable or authentic the data is in the realm of being a representation of the actual views of the participants. To facilitate credibility in this study, I made sure that the semi-structured interviews reflected the views of the participants as true and reliable data. I did this through ensuring that the generated data was virtually recorded through the use of Zoom video communications. Recording the interviews allowed me to concentrate on the interview without writing and made sure that the data generated was a firsthand rendition of the participants' experiences and perceptions. According to research, the use of Zoom enables simultaneous audio and video recording of the interviewer, with the possibility of audio only recording of the participants, which maintains the in-person connection between the interviewer and interviewee, while maintaining anonymity (Gray et al., 2021). The recordings were later accurately transcribed, and where permission was granted to use the video recording, careful note of any gestures and/ or facial expressions which added to the rich data was noted. In addition to this, interviewing participants in an environment they were comfortable in allowed additional data to be collected about their lifeworld. After this, I made the transcriptions readily available to the academics so that they could corroborate that the data had been represented, as they intended it to be represented adding to the element of credibility of the study.

4.9.3 DEPENDABILITY

Dependability was also another trustworthiness criterion involving the explicit revealing of the steps taken in generating data, and making sure that it remains unchanged (Cuthbert & Moules, 2014). Dependability is about making sure that the necessary steps to generating data are clearly stated and that there is consistency within the data. Dependability was achieved in this study by an audit trail, which involved reverting back to what was used to generate data and the type of analysis used in the study (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). For an audit trail to happen, the researcher needs to provide the crude data as taken down in the interviews (Anney, 2014).

An audit trail is one of the steps to ensure dependability in a study. An audit trail was carried out in a stepwise manner, explaining how the data was generated, noted and analysed (Bowen, 2009). To facilitate the audit trail, it was made clear that data was generated through semi-structured interviews.

4.9.4 TRANSFERABILITY

Transferability refers to the likelihood of transferring the results of one research study to another of which would be in a different setting or context involving different groups of people mostly known as research participants (see Anney, 2014; Moon et al., 2016). According to Li (2004), the researcher of a study makes the phenomenon researched upon transferable to another study by making use of thick descriptions. Thick descriptions are broad details on the procedures of data generation, and include the geographical area where data was generated in the research report. It gives the person who reads the ability to critique and review the suitability of the research outcomes for another study (Tobin & Begley, 2004).

The findings of this research are only for the academics of a particular higher education institution because they are the focus of this research project, hence transferability is not likely. Moreover, it is a study conducted in the current academic year, while another study conducted in another academic year would be certain changes that would lead to the results not being the same. Context is also key in research. This study took place at University of KwaZulu Natal Edgewood Campus at the School of Education, and another study in a different context could yield different results as context would be independent of that of the previous study.

4.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Researchers are guided by certain ethics when carrying out studies. Ethics exemplify individual and communal codes of conduct that require adherence to some principles (Biggs & Coleman, 2007). Ethics offer rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards participants. The following ethical aspects were taken into consideration in the process of conducting this study.

4.10.1 GAINING ACCESS

Ethics has to do with behaviour that is considered right or wrong, and is an important consideration in research, particularly with research involving humans (Bertram & Christiansen, 2010). Each course has its code of ethics that needs to be followed regarding processes of that course (Airey et al., 2006). It was therefore, of utmost importance that I follow the ethical procedures stated by the university ethics committee. The study dealt with human beings; the university academics. What was firstly required, was for me to apply for and seek to obtain gatekeeper permission from the University registrar to grant me access to the research site, that is, the university. This was then followed by the application to the University ethics committee to request for ethical permission to conduct the study[2]. Permission was granted prior to my entry into the university to do the research, for which an annexure is attached for the permission granted.

4.10.2 RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS AND CONSENT

After obtaining gatekeeper permission from the University Registrar, I followed by application to the University ethics committee for ethical clearance to conduct the study. Subsequent to this, I drafted an email which was solely for the purpose of recruiting prospective participants for the research. The email was sent to each of the prospective participants institution email address. Various attempts were made at acquiring the required number of participants, as the academics were busy with registrations of new students and other job-related tasks. Once replies were received, I personally engaged the selected academics to explain to them what the study was about and how they can partake in the research process. Once participants had agreed, I then gave them consent forms, which took the form of an agreement between the

[2] Please see addendum I attached in page 119

researcher and the participant. This was to ensure that participants gave informed consent, which meant that the research participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study, as well as the procedures and risks involved in the research (Cohen, et al., 2011) and they were free to give their consent to participate. Schofield (2014) notes that informed consent promotes autonomy and trust.

4.10.3 CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

One of the principles of ethics about research is that the participants' anonymity must be ensured during the generation and analyses of the data. Coffelt (2017) states that confidentiality and anonymity are ethical practices designed to protect the privacy of human subjects, while collecting, analysing, and reporting data. To ensure anonymity, I made use of pseudonyms instead of using the participants' real names. I also made available to the participants, consent forms to sign in order to confirm their availability[3]. The consent form also specified that they (participants) were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time, should they feel their rights to privacy were violated as the study was on a voluntary basis. For confidentiality, the participants responses were stored safely by my academic supervisor. This was to ensure that the data collected was retrieved by any other individuals, which could compromise confidentiality.

4.10.4 DATA PROTECTION

Data protection is designed to protect personal data stored on computers, or in an organised paper filing system. Individuals have legal rights to control information about themselves. To ensure that the data generated was safe, I was guided by the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal ethics office in terms of sharing the information. The data from this research was made available in the university library, and also the protection was held by the university in terms of the copyright rules. My research supervisor had the responsibility of protecting this data in a storage system of the computer and a hard copy in his office locked cupboard used strictly upon the permission only.

[3] Please see addendum number II for a copy of the consent letters, in page 120-121

4.11 LIMITATIONS

The study was carried out with academics from the University of KwaZulu Natal and this was a limitation, as the data was only in relation to one province and one university campus. This thus, implied that the views and data generated could not be transferable to another institution or other academics as it was solely their experiences of the emergency remote teaching. However, focusing on a small group of academics and exploring their experiences of the emergency remote teaching helped us understand in depth the challenges, limitations and successes of teaching and learning in a pandemic period.

I anticipated that the study could be further limited by the participants' psychological or emotional state of mind, as a result of the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic. Some might withhold certain information for privacy reasons, some because it is still a recent occurrence and brings back unwanted memories. To avert this limitation, I exercised caution along with patience and compassion to avoid participants exiting my research.

Due to rising number of Covid-19 cases and deaths, academics were particularly reluctant to participate in face-to-face interviews. This affected the strategies I had initially put in place on how to conduct the interviews and I had to revert to some virtual interviews, which were recorded. Owing to connectivity issues and network challenges, some of the interviews were recorded telephonic interviews, which took away the element of facial expressions and body language that could have allowed me to see different emotions of the participants. As I was working with mostly seasoned academics, they were able to describe their emotions to counter for the missing element. The alternate methods were taken to accommodate and safeguard against the further spread of the virus, and to avoid compromising the academics well-being during participation.

4.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The main aim of this study was to explore the academics' experiences of emergency remote teaching in a higher education institution. In the chapter, it was evident that the qualitative approach best suited this study, which is mainly concerned with the lived experiences of individuals. This was successfully done using the interpretive paradigm and semi-structured interviews to get thick descriptions of the academics' experiences of the emergency remote

teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the following chapter, I offer the findings and discussions of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATIONS AND FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the research methodology of the study was discussed. In this chapter, the data that was generated using semi-structured interviews is discussed. The semi structured interviews were virtually recorded, transcribed, coded and thematically arranged. Seven participants from a University in KwaZulu-Natal were virtually interviewed to observe Covid19 protocols, for the data generation stage. The participants were given pseudonyms to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Allen and Wiles (2016) concur that this process, although not so much technical, had psychological meaning to both the participants and the content. The participants' direct quotations are included in the data presentation to support the research findings.

In this chapter, I provide a thematic analysis of the data generated while maintaining the main focus of letting the data speak for itself. I then theorise the findings and to abstract the findings in relation to the research questions.

5.2 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data generated is arranged in themes. To ensure credibility of the study, the use of direct quotes of the participants was utilised (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Direct quotes give rich data of the participants' experiences. The manner in which the themes are discussed links the themes with the literature of the study. This link is carried through in the way that the themes interlink with one another, and can thus, be discussed as part of each other as well.

It is also worthy to note that the participants were given pseudonyms for confidentiality and to aid in identifying the different participants comments.

I now turn to outlining the themes that emerged during data generation.
Table 2:

SUMMARY LIST OF THE THEMES IN THE CHAPTER

THEME 1	The sudden beginning of ERT
THEME 2	Increased workloads and short timelines
THEME 3	The importance of technical support
THEME 4	Lack of class attendance
THEME 5	Plagiarism
THEME 6	High student academic performance
THEME 7	Longing for contact classes
THEME 8	The trauma of ERT
THEME 9	Some advantages of ERT

5.2.1 THEME 1: THE SUDDEN BEGINNING OF ERT

Most of the research participants were of the opinion that there was not enough time given to implement emergency remote teaching. Some likened the feeling to that of being thrown into the deep end and expected to either sink or swim. Considering the way in which the pandemic gripped the nation in March 2020, there were no clear instructions of how education was to be carried out in the different sectors. This led to hasty interventions by those in higher positions, who then directed unclear instructions to subordinates, leading to confusion and anxiety among some of the academics. This was because of some academics' lack of exposure to ICT (Information Communications Technology) and other new methods that could enable them to teach remotely. It is thus, important for leadership in HEIs to take on the responsibility of initiating and implementing the use of ICT, to facilitate teaching and learning in HEIs (Dwivedi & Joshi, 2021).

For example, Sizwe, Sindisiwe and Priyanka commented on the urgency with which ERT was introduces thus;

> *It just came upon us, and one had to hit the ground running as far as online teaching and learning was concerned. So, there was not enough time for preparation, we had to learn along the way and make mistakes, learn from them but unfortunately the mistakes we were making were significant mistakes because they had to determine someone else's future whether they become teachers', or they don't. So, these were serious mistakes so someone had to learn from them, and they had to learn pretty quickly because if we did not correct them, we would have continued making the same mistakes, whereas there are many mistakes every day and worse. (Sizwe)*

In the quote above, Sizwe suggests that the sudden emergence of the pandemic forced him to make rapid changes to his work, and learn new pedagogy to enhance teaching and learning. For him, it meant making mistakes, which could have repercussions on the students' future. This also meant that he had to quickly adapt to the changes to prevent constant errors that would be difficult to reverse.

> *The buzz word that they more especially used was that "no student should be left behind" and again, even though students were having problems with the network and all those things. (Sindisiwe)*

From Sindisiwe's quote above, it is apparent that there was some form of leadership or instructions from above, that was the driving force. Phrases such as "no student should be left behind" and "saving the academic year" were common to the participants. Even though there were technical problems, connectivity problems and other inhibiting factors; the academics were still expected to forge their way and do what was expected of them regardless.

> *The training wasn't enough. It was some form of crash course because we were told we had to attend. (Palesa)*

This rushed nature of events described by Palesa above, suggests that the academics also struggled to adapt to ERT and the lack of adequate, effective training played a major part in the negative attitude that most academics had towards ERT. This was seen as some of

the academics complained about the training not fulfilling its purpose because it was rushed, and they had no choice of attending or not.

> *Then suddenly, boom, 2020! Even more changes, it was suddenly from contact to emergency remote teaching. It was back to square one, learning everything from scratch, changing everything, going through you tube videos, learning how to use different platforms, I did not know what hit me. I haven't really conquered all my fears but I have grown so much. You stop learning until you are dead. I have taken it in my stride now, I expect change and if there is no change there is no transformation and there is no growth. So that is my attitude and I think that is what carried me through this whole situation, to just be willing and to go with the flow and just keep on changing and adapting to change. (Priyanka)*

Priyanka expressed similar sentiments towards the rushed nature of the emergency remote teaching. For her, the disruption was more in the changes that the ERT presented, such as having to work from scratch developing content that she could use for teaching purposes. She made a further comment that this had since improved because she had adopted a willing attitude, which allowed her to evolve as the time passed.

Participants showed a bit of hesitancy towards the implementation of ERT at the beginning of the pandemic but gradually acclimatized to the challenge and improved their skills and confidence. Transformation is an important element when changes are introduced in any environment. If change is gradual, then the receivers of the change, in this case the academics, will adapt with least resistance.

In the literature, scholars such as Huang et al. (2021) also make mention of the disciplinary differences between academics in computer related fields and those in other disciplines of education, and their preparedness for teaching remotely. They note that academics, in the other disciplines were initially unprepared but academics in computer science fields were more prepared than other academics who reported that teaching foundational concepts effectively was challenging without face-to-face instruction. Some of the academics found themselves trying to reconfigure their lives in the new digital environment as they transitioned from face-to-face to ERT, but others did not readily embrace ERT, and tried to retain their traditional pedagogies.

5.2.2 THEME 2: INCREASED WORKLOAD AND SHORT TIMELINES

According to Gillet-Swan (2017), the introduction of online teaching presents challenges, which include heavy workloads for instructors (setting up and creating content for online platforms), and difficulties in maintaining an online presence, especially when chats are rapid and characterised by multiple voices and challenges in engaging and supporting isolated students. This was also proved to be true during the introduction of emergency remote teaching as participants commented hereafter.

> *Online learning is hell, that's the long and short of it! There is too much admin, too little teaching and probably very little learning as well, if any at all. We are just chasing numbers, chasing dead-lines, we want to meet objectives that would not have been properly achieved. So, we were just ticking boxes. Too much admin work. You've got to work online and working online takes time, more time than you would marking a script for example a hardcopy in front of you and having to work online, mark something on the screen, it takes time. (Sizwe)*

Sizwe had very strong feelings of resentment towards emergency remote teaching. He felt that there an added amount of administration brought on by emergency remote teaching. He also further stated that the amount of administration hindered the teaching process, as he was trying to reach the institutions targets as opposed to teaching effectively. According to him, more time was spent on assigning a grade to a paper submitted online than that required when marking a physical script.

> *In terms of administration, it meant a whole lot more. We had to change our module templates and the school had sent us through with new templates, so we had to change our templates and make changes. We had to also become familiar with things like making videos and uploading those videos onto Moodle. It also meant how do we ensure that our students are engaged? Are they just completing the assessments and not engaging in any of the material? That was another concern, as we couldn't put a face to the work because of our big numbers and at least the biggest change was that we were not getting our students face to face interacting in our classes. That was a huge problem that I found. (Priyanka)*

Priyanka commented on how cumbersome the task of moving work to the online mode was. It required a certain level of skill, where the academic had to keep in mind the end user engagement, which could only be acquired through some form of training. This proved that moving work online was not an easy task.

> *I would often have to change my assessments to try and prevent plagiarism amongst students, and to accommodate other students who did not submit timeously. This created a lot of unwanted extra work for me because of setting these assessments, marking them individually as opposed to marking using the same memorandum for everyone. (Kevin)*

From Kevins' statement, it is evident that academics had a lot of extra work that accompanied their daily activities of teaching and learning. Some of the academics mentioned alternative ways they avoided plagiarism other than using the technological methods stated prior to this. Other than using [4]Turnitin, they changed their assessments a number of times to accommodate the students who were facing challenges because of their home contexts, connectivity issues, data shortages, and other social issues that may have caused them not to submit assignments or assessments on time.

> *I don't know whether I could be drawing a line and saying that there was an added task because what was happening and what is also even happening now, is that we have Zoom classes and sometimes we use Moodle and we were trained on how to use Kaltura. We were taught or rather trained on how to use Kaltura and all those things. It wasn't an added task, but it was along the lines. It's only what was attached to the new shift, to the new normal, that was somehow troublesome but anyways, I don't think that there was anything more because we were still working according to the timetables that we have. It's not that there was something else that was added. (Sindisiwe)*

Sindisiwe explained that even though she was not used to this new normal, she was of the opinion that her workload did not change drastically although there were some changes.

According to some of the academics, there was very limited time given to them to prepare themselves for the emergency remote teaching. They felt that much was expected from them

[4] Turnitin is an internet-based plagiarism detection service (Mahabeer and Pirtheepal, 2019).

in a short period of time. Although they had approximately a month to gather their thoughts and prepare themselves mentally for teaching remotely, they did not feel completely ready to embark on the journey brought on by the pandemic. Many of the academics still had fear of the unknown, some had doubts about their capabilities of handling such situations and the different pedagogies that came with teaching remotely.

One of the academics, Sizwe suggests that;

> *There was no time. Remember when Covid-19 struck earlier on they didn't give time for notices. It just came upon us, and one had to hit the ground running as far as online teaching and learning is concerned. So, there was not enough time for preparation, we had to learn along the way and make mistakes, learn from them, but unfortunately, the mistakes we were making were significant mistakes because they had to determine someone else's future; whether they become teachers, or they don't. So, these were serious mistakes, so someone had to learn from them, and they had to learn pretty quickly because if we did not correct them, we would have continued making the same mistakes whereas there are many mistakes every day and worse. (Sizwe)*

Sizwe thought that the lack of time was a problematic factor. He was of the opinion that academics were not given enough time to prepare themselves for the new pedagogy of emergency remote teaching. For him, there were many mistakes made, which could have been avoided had there been enough time provided for preparation. These mistakes could cost learners their future.

However, some academics felt differently about the amount of time they had to prepare for remote teaching. They noted that although there was limited time to get accustomed to emergency remote teaching, they were somehow able to navigate their way around the time constraint and work well with the online mode of teaching. This is evident from Kevin statement below:

> *When the shutdown took place, I think there were 2 months before classes resumed, I think that gave me enough time to look at the module outline and look at the module outline to see what is achievable in this time and what I needed to reduce and maybe completely take out. But I think there was enough time given, but I think*

if more time was given, it would have been better. I think the time was sufficient, but I think what would have taken up my time was figuring out what would and what wouldn't work so like for example take video lectures. Like for now there's low attendance rates what do you do then because you create this fantastic lecture and all the interactive links sharing of live lecture, but you have poor attendance. In that case, I then thought of creating short 3 minute or 5min video clips, like if I were to teach a four loop structure, I would do a 4 or 5 three minute clips post that up on the Moodle system, and the students who don't make it to the live sessions because it was a challenge to get everyone to the live sessions. (Kevin)

There was still that fear, like fear of anything that is new. There will always be that doubt of, will I be able to make it but at the end of the day it had to be done and you thinking maybe these students are taking screenshots of me, or are they recording me, all those fears and being online. But funny enough, maybe we don't see them, but they never did do all those things, they were disciplined as if they were in a normal class/contact class. Yes, there might be those disruptions maybe there's a goat making some noises and some students can't mute themselves. Basically, I think we were more prepared than our students because you need to tell them to mute themselves, some don't know how to mute themselves. Yes, it was a learning curve for all of us. (Katlego)

Katlego's' statement shows that, even though there may have been time constraints, the academics continued working regardless of their fears and what was going on around them. Sindisiwe had mixed feelings about the emergency remote teaching. She felt prepared, as the modules were reduced along with the number of tasks required, which enabled her to work more efficiently. However, she also felt as though she had no choice in the matter, and had to do the work regardless of being prepared or not.

Yes, I can say we were prepared, and we were given time. Because I remember when this started, the module administrators and the leadership and the academic leaders for teaching and learning were asking us to reduce the number of tasks, the assessment tasks that were supposed to be given to students. So, we were prepared, but not prepared. There were so many glitches, but we had to see it

through. Like I was telling you that Professor X said we had to save the academic year, so it was a matter of doing it no choice about it. (Sindisiwe)

Sindisiwe mentioned that she observed the time given to them to be adequate for preparing themselves for the academic year. They even went as far as to reduce the course assessments as a directive from the stakeholders in charge. Even though she was reluctant because of the glitches she experienced, she continued as there were no two ways about it.

The increased workload and short timelines may also have adversely affected the academics, leading them to conceptualise teaching and learning as the 'dumping' of curriculum material online in an attempt to salvage what was increasingly becoming a lost academic year (Hlatshwayo, 2020).

The feelings expressed by the academics demonstrate that time was of the essence in navigating emergency remote teaching. The academics had to be resilient and put aside their fears and frustrations to ensure that the academic year was saved. It also became apparent that academics had to acquaint themselves with new pedagogies and skills to enable them to adapt to the new normal, so that their workloads are not as cumbersome and time consuming. This also highlighted the importance of the theme of training, within any higher education institution.

I now turn to the next theme on the importance of technical support that was common amongst the academics during data generation.

5.2.3 THEME 3: THE IMPORTANCE OF TECHNICAL SUPPORT

With the emergence of the pandemic, there has been a growing need for academics to acquire skills related to information computer technology, to enhance their skills and flexibility when working with emergency remote teaching. In order to engage in emergency remote teaching (ERT) successfully, academics have to adopt an attitude of willingness to learn, and a change of perception towards technology. According to Yiong et al. (2008), having technical support is critical to competence in content development, management and e-facilitation.

Academics who took part in the study reported that, although they had basic computer skills, they however, required some form of technical support or training when they began their journey of teaching remotely. This was due to the increased demand on the academics to produce content meant for teaching purposes, in the form of videos, PowerPoint presentations, and e-learning platforms. For some of the academics, the technical support provided to them was much needed, although there were times where they felt overwhelmed by the amount of training sessions and workshops provided. This led to an overload of content, where some knowledge was retained while the other was not absorbed. This led to challenges at a later stage when needed.

Technical support and training did not only pertain to implementation during ERT, but was also an integral part of designing assessments that were credible and valid for quality results. According to Maphalala and Adigun (2021), the lack of substantial support and assistance from the technical department is a major hurdle that prevented effective and efficient usage of e-learning facilities in various higher education institutions. Based on the analysis of the data generated from interviewing the academics, it was evident that the institution that the academics were a part of, had taken academics' possible skills vulnerability into account. All the academics reported to have received some form of training and technical support offered by the institution, to empower them for the journey ahead.

> *Yes, we were trained, there were many workshops. There were many workshops and they ended up becoming very pointless because there was too much to absorb at the same time. As a teacher you would know that, that's not how you teach you need to give your learners time to digest, to find out if they have understood. So, we were given a whole lot of workshops and again it goes back to, or it boils down to what I said earlier on, those that were giving us workshops were ticking their own boxes, that's what it boils down to, "box-ticking" exercises. (Sizwe)*

From Sizwe's experience above, it can be deduced that training was indeed offered by the institution. He however, pointed out that there were too many of the support sessions that they eventually lost their impact. In essence, the sessions did not fulfil their purpose and it was a matter of participating and completing them without full comprehension.

The training wasn't enough. It was some form of crash course because we were told we had to attend. Maybe we were told a week before the training actually started on such and such a date you will have to attend, this is what is going to be looked at. We looked at how do you present your lesson, how you use Kaltura where you may have very large videos, how to use PowerPoint with audio, how to use videos, how to record yourself, how to use voice recordings and all those things. (Sindisiwe)

Yes, there were some trainings. I think there were some sessions and when we were shifting, there were a lot of engagements, almost weekly. I remember one of our colleagues was in the U.S because he is one of the people who are experts in ICT, he had to wake up at around midnight that side and train us: this is how you use up a question, this is how you transfer content from physical to online. So, we were trained online even though the person training you was not in front of you. (Katlego)

There was a lot of support and training, but it was also about the amount of time and freedom you have to actually fully engage in the training. Because we still needed to produce lectures and lessons and we had marking to do. We can't always attend everything. There were numerous calls and invitations, and I did attend, and it was quite beneficial because I would not have come this far without that kind of support especially at the beginning where we did not know how to make videos. There was a lot of help and collegiality as well, where colleagues who knew more were willing to share. (Priyanka)

All the participants, except for one academic, attended a workshop or a programme for technical support, provided by their institution. However, Sizwe and Sindisiwe had a somewhat negative attitude towards the training or technical support programmes provided. Sizwe was of the opinion that these programmes did not serve a purpose for him; and instead of helping, they wasted the time he could have been utilising preparing for lesson presentations or other valuable work. However, Sindisiwe did note some positives from the technical support provided. She stated that the programmes were helpful in teaching them valuable skills in remote teaching. She was also forthcoming about the spirit of collegiality amongst the colleagues who were more acquainted with

technology. Furthermore, Palesa reiterated the importance of attending training programs. This was manifested in the comment she made,

> *I attended many workshops virtually which were aimed at capacitating academics on the use of various tools for teaching students. I made use of many and came back and practiced thoroughly on how the programs or applications are used. I am a perfectionist, so I wanted to make engaging presentations and used trial and error to perfect my craft. I'm not yet perfect but I'm getting there. (Palesa)*

Prinyaka, Palesa and Katlego also engaged in the training programmes but two of them complained about the amount of time available to honour the invitations sent out to attend such programmes. They both acknowledged the benefits of the support and noted that they would not have made such great strides if there was no support provided. Katlego had vivid memories of participating while a colleague from the ICT department facilitated online. He was of the impression that as participants participated in the sessions, they were easily distracted and sometimes lost out on valuable information being relayed.

Kevin, a Computer Science academic, admitted to not having attended any training programmes and was, instead, a part of the academics that assisted others with skills development. Most of skills that he needed were acquired through trial and error, and from being a naturally inquisitive person with the passion to keep learning new skills.

> *I didn't attend any training and given that we come from the comp science department it was a matter of trial and error, but we were not 100% perfect and there's a few things that I had to go and learn on my own, it could have been covered in our training, but I had the basics I had to just explore. So, I'm actually a Kaltura champion and was responsible for training the staff or gave a workshop. (Kevin)*

The data gathered from the academics revealed that training or technical support formed an important element of emergency remote teaching. It was vital that academics participated in the programmes provided, as they expanded their knowledge and skills on computer applications. Although, to some extent, the programmes were unwelcome due

to the increased workload that academics had, the skills gained were deemed invaluable. It can be deduced that the growing momentum that online teaching and learning is receiving demands that academics integrate this new pedagogy into their teaching, regardless of whether they are traditional academics used to contact teaching or the new age academics.

I now turn to discussing the next theme from data generation, namely; the lack of class attendance.

5.2.4 THEME 4: LACK OF CLASS ATTENDANCE

The participants' responses suggested that there was a large decrease in attendance when comparing contact teaching and emergency remote teaching. Participants noted varied kinds of behaviour amongst the students, but the common trend was a marked decrease in attendance.

> *In a class of 250 students, you'll be lucky to have 20 students, and out of those 20 who would have logged on to attend, half would have logged on and disappeared to wherever they want to go. So, effectively, you are talking to yourself, and those who are too shy to leave the class because you have seen their names on the screen, would sit there and no one bothers to answer. So, you talk to yourself almost literally. You ask a question, you ask if they are there and no one answers. It is a very frustrating experience.*

Students demonstrated a lack of interest to the new mode of teaching and learning. This could have been as a result of the non-interactive nature of remote teaching or that students were not in a conducive learning environment to take part in the lessons.

> *There were lots of excuses, including connectivity issues, load-shedding. As I'm speaking to you, there has just been load-shedding 10minutes ago at 12. So, its load-shedding, electricity issues- where some students live in areas where there is just no electricity, data as well. They complained that using data during the day is expensive. It runs out quickly as opposed to using it at night, so that's why they don't attend lectures because they feel that they are wasting data when they could just listen to the lecture at night when it's cheaper.*

Furthermore, Sizwe complained about the varied excuses that students gave to escape their deadlines. They gave excuses ranging from network or connectivity issues, data usage of the

apps used for remote connectivity, and electricity load-shedding. He found that he could not differentiate between genuine excuses and those which were not. This caused him to have to offer the same assessments more than once to students who failed to meet the deadlines set, which in turn affected his ability to meet his deadlines.

> *You'll find that with Zoom, as I started with Zoom in 2020, I had 206 students. That's not a large number, it was so difficult to control. Secondly, they did not attend, I would send them the Zoom link and maybe I will end up with about 10 or 12 students.*
>
> *You can tell that those that have attended are not even there attentively. Others start calling others. I don't know whether it's excitement or what, but they'll be shouting "ey s'bani bani" (so and so) referring to a person on the other end of a call. You mute them, they unmute themselves.* (Suddenly remembers additional information) *I'm also teaching post-grad students, oh with those ones, the experience was so good! That is what I have also observed, that when you are using a virtual platform to teach the undergraduate students and post graduate students, there is such a huge difference.*

Sindisiwe had a similar experience to Sizwe, although somewhat different when she compares undergraduate students to post graduate students. She noted that the students lacked attention to the lesson that was presented remotely. She reported that undergraduates behaved out of character when they were taught remotely, showing signs of unnecessary excitement and not participating in the lesson. However, she did note a considerable improvement in attendance, online etiquette and active engagement amongst the post graduate students.

> *Firstly, with contact classes, we would have about 70% attendance but with synchronous classes if we had about 30 in a class it would still work. So, with a Zoom recording, you are not aware of what they are understanding and what they're not understanding. So, when you have something that is synchronous, you get them asking questions and I think that helps.*

Priyanka also noted the drop in class attendance but felt that it also worked to her advantage, even though she thought that synchronous classes led to increased student participation.

There are students who do badly, mostly because of no communication from their side. They don't join the online classes. You send them a message or email saying that I haven't seen you in my class or I haven't heard from you, but I get no response. So, I have made effort to reach to them, but I don't get a response from them. I always try and drop an email to check on students as many things are happening, even to us as academics, and you'd be surprised when the student tells about a challenge they have been having and it is a genuine problem. And, with some students who exploit this you can see from their performance in every module and constant problems or excuses they will have, maybe throughout 5 modules they will be doing.

Kevin mentioned that he noted the decreased class attendance and relied on constant communication with the students via email to check on their absence from the online classes. He found that some students were experiencing certain challenges, which may have been the cause for them not attending classes. He also noted that some were exploiting the system and presenting different excuses throughout the course of their studies.

For those who were unable to attend, you could upload the recording for them, and for those that were able to attend. I remember there was a module I did last year where I did both, but I think in 2020, we only used recordings because of the number of students we had. Zoom has a limit of the number of people who can attend, so we agreed that we tried it the first time and saw that there was chaos there. Some of the students were uncontrollable as they logged in wherever they were. After 2 lectures, we decided to record, and we'd record like a 10min slide upload it and then another 10 so that they don't finish their data. So, you couldn't just upload a one-hour lesson, had to be reduced to 10minutes. (Katlego)

Katlego indicated that the Zoom app which was the common method of communication between students and themselves also had limitations on the number of participants it could accommodate. Therefore, it was not only that students did not attend, but the limited numbers the app could take could have caused some students to get demotivated from attending. He used this opportunity to his advantage and recorded lectures for those that could not attend, and compressed them into shorter time segments to limit the amount of data that students loose per lesson.

The findings indicated that academics were challenged by the students' lack of attendance. This resulted in them changing their teaching strategies in order to accommodate the large numbers that were not attending classes. The newly adopted strategies enabled the academics to reach a far wider number of students, and positively affected the performance. The students' lack of attendance also highlighted that academics needed to possess some empathy towards the challenges that students maybe experiencing. It was, therefore, important for the academics to carefully consider the reasons of absenteeism during lessons, as some were genuine and needed the academics' intervention.

I now turn to the next theme that emerged during data generation; plagiarism.

5.2.5 THEME 5: PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism refers to the use of intellectual work of others through stealing their ideas, without using appropriate sources of reference (Sutherland, 2008). According to Mahabeer and Pirtheepal (2019), plagiarism is a longstanding, common, worldwide ethical issue facing universities, which disrupts learning and the transmission of knowledge. The participants in this study noted a common trend of plagiarism in the work that was submitted by the students, as part of their assessment tasks. The work showed that academic integrity was compromised as students worked largely in groups to submit an assessment, which resulted in commonalities within their written work. The academics felt that these similarities in work submitted were as a result of assessments moving online during emergency remote teaching, and students having no supervision while writing them. This gave them ample opportunity to assist each other in various ways.

While one cannot only blame plagiarism on the movement of teaching and learning to an online mode, it can also be attributed to a lack of awareness of the moral implications by the students (Perry, 2010). Students are believed to lack adequate referencing skills or paraphrasing skills when dealing with work from other sources. This can be construed as plagiarism, whereas it is unintentional because of the lack of proper referencing and paraphrasing skills. According to Brown (2001) and Gardener (2012), assessments form an integral part of realising teaching and learning goals and in improving student performance, and cannot be removed from the process of education. However, if plagiarism plays such a negative role, it defeats the purpose of assessments. The negative role played by plagiarism is apparent from the statements made by the participants. Sizwe said that;

There is a lot of plagiarism, copying, sharing of material, sometimes when you become aware as a lecturer that there's been copying there's not much you can do because you are chasing deadlines. There's no time to go back to see who did what and with who. You've got to mark this thing, get it over and done with and move on to the next topic.

Priyanka had the same sentiments and stated that;

I have also had challenges though, I had a student that submitted work that was plagiarised. When I checked up on his work it was 100% copied, and he had to redo everything and after redoing it, it was still bad. This makes us feel so bad, the plagiarism and copying from the internet.

From the above responses, it is evident that plagiarism was on the rise, and negatively affected the work of the academics. Monitoring students' work during the time of emergency remote teaching was a laborious, exhausting process of policing the work rather than measuring the student academic capabilities and achievements. One could go as far as to say that the workload of the academics was increased.

Participants also felt that there were not enough methods put in place to police the growing trend of plagiarism, especially since they were working with large class numbers. Some of the participants devised their own methods to curb plagiarism, like using programmes which have been technologically designed to safeguard against this and some of them just worked with what they had just to get the job done. Some of their techniques led to a concern about the quality of the marks that the students received, and the credibility of the degree. Kagiso commented that;

I don't think we are more competent or equipped as institutions on the security on how to avoid students from copying one another. That's the problem we have at the moment, because a 60minutes test [takes] someone takes five minutes, that's impossible, means there were answers in front of you already.

Kagiso was particularly troubled by the lack of effort the institution was putting to curb plagiarism in the assessments. He was also of the opinion that academics lacked the know-how to prevent students from plagiarising.

Walker (2010) mentions that programs like Turnitin, SafeAssign and Drobox can be used as tools to detect and deter plagiarism, although there are still some challenges noted with assessment. Mahabeer and Pirtheepal (2019) believe that plagiarism can be avoided by using hybrid designed assessments. Kevin through trial and error, devised ways to curb plagiarism.

> *Up to now, I am still doing that, where you test something out say Moodle or Learn 2022 and you see that this is an interesting feature let me try this and you find that students are maybe copying or something and you try something else. (Kevin)*

What can be understood from Kevins' statement above is that, what seemed to be a negative turn of events, also had some positive outcomes. Some of the academics found the challenge of plagiarism as an opportunity to broaden their experience in technology. They explored different ways other than using the programmes mentioned by Walker (2010) above. The academics redesigned the assessment to accommodate those that had problems related to connectivity issues, data and other social problems, while trying to work on the assessment. They also decreased the period of time students could do an assessment online, by ensuring that once the student is logged on to the assessment, they had exactly two hours (for instance) and not longer, decreasing the amount of time one could get assistance. This can be evident from Priyanka's' statement below:

> *The first time they all cheated because I didn't know how to prevent cheating, which was to have the quiz open at a specific time and if you gave them a second chance, change the quiz totally. So, these are the things I learnt along the way and I feel that right now, although I'm there where I need to be, I have actually improved a lot in the integrity of my assessments and the engagement of my students.*

What the participants made apparent is that, ERT gave students many opportunities to redeem themselves academically. The students had ample time to collaborate with their peers, which led to opportunities of shared work. Another factor that contributed to the high plagiarism rate, was the lack of commitment that students had towards their academic work. The observed increase in plagiarism amongst the students indicated the importance of security measures that must be put in place when working remotely, in order to prevent such trends. These security

measures can be in the form of programmes designed for each method of assessment or submission. Thus, academics have to be suitably equipped with the know-how of the use of these programmes as well.

I now turn to the sixth theme that emerged from the data generation, mainly the high student academic performance.

5.2.6 THEME 6: HIGH STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

A large number of the participants felt that the growing trend in plagiarism was also an opportunity for the students to improve their academic performance indirectly. This is because it was noted that most high assessment marks were linked to plagiarism amongst the students. Some academics argue that some students were already displaying high levels of commitment towards their work, and their performance resembled their continued efforts prior to the emergency remote teaching. This increased academic performance, however, was a cause for concern because the marks that most students attained during face-to-face teaching, did not correlate with their marks from ERT assessments. Most academics felt that massification also contributed to the high-performance rate. Massification in this context means the increase in the enrolment of students accessing higher education (Mohamedbhai 2014). This illuminated the possibility that most students were getting assistance of some sort or copying directly from the internet.

Sindisiwe noted that the students' performance was not reflective of their effort into the work and went as far as saying:

> *The high marks were a result of copying from one another because that is what they did. You mark 100 scripts and when you are on the 50th script you realise you are marking one in the same script, so if you start penalising them how many are you going to penalise because they have copied from one another, and the work is just the same. (Sindisiwe)*

Kagiso also noted that students performed increasingly well during the emergency remote teaching period. He believes this increase was directly attributed to the increasing plagiarism.

Student performance was in the 90% regions. All were passing. No matter what you do, they will always find ways to cheat the system. Like, I tried essay questions, but you see the patterns in the answers; they are the same. (Kagiso)

According to Sizwe, students performed exceptionally well because they had mastered techniques of plagiarism, and achieved this by working in groups during times of assessments as they were away from the roving eye of the academics.

The student performance 9 out of 10 was highly indicative of the high calibre of plagiarising that they have mastered. They copy, they do these things in groups, they have mastered the system, no matter what you do. You may try to change the questions, reshuffle them, but believe you me, the students have a way of mastering these, and before you know it, the whole class has 98% or 100%. (Sizwe)

Palesa had similar challenges as the previous participants. She revealed that she went as far as to monitor the students by making them switch on their web cameras while writing certain assessments, so that she could prove the reliability of the students' marks. The results they obtained afterwards were within the achievable range for 'normal' teaching and learning.

Previously, learners could sit in one dorm room and help each other. They would have one student who becomes the "sacrificial lamb", who will do the test first, and the rest would then copy from that student, and all achieve really high marks. (Palesa)

Kevin experienced the high performance a bit differently from the other participants. Although he noted a general increase in the performance amongst his students, the increase was not implausibly high. It was evident that students benefitted from working in their own environment and at their own space. The improvement may have also been due to the students not being under any pressure of the classroom context, and not feeling pressure to perform. The quote below elaborates on Kevin's experience.

In 2020, I saw the trend that students who were the high achievers actually went all out and made the most of online learning environment. The ones that just want to pass for the sake of passing I think they performed a bit higher than when they were face-to-face. A general increase of approximately 10 % was noted for both

type of students due to the fact that the student is at their leisure in their own environment. They have their own time and pace. In class I would give them 45min to do a task but when they are online they are in their own space, a comfort zone that also helps them as they are comfortable, less pressure. (Priyanka)

In contrast to what was experienced by the other academics, Priyanka was of the opinion that her students may have initially attained high marks, but maintained that with continued changes to her assessment methods, the student performance distinguished those who were just passing and those that were working hard for their marks. This change took place after she attended a workshop, which was aimed at designing assessments based on Bloom's Taxonomy. The workshop helped in designing assessments with different levels of questioning and not just low order questions.

Then I attended a workshop on higher order questions not so much like tricking them kind of thing, but how to make the quiz not as easy as they expect it to be. If you look at the marks, for other modules they would get 90% but for my module they got 60% max. At the beginning, my quiz was not valid and had no integrity and I knew their results were not representative of their own work, but I have since navigated that space well, and eventually they became valid. (Priyanka)

Overall, the above data demonstrates that students benefitted much from working in the own environments. This allowed them to be at ease, under less pressure, and have ample time to interact with their study material, which gave them an opportunity to perform better. Working in their own private spaces was somehow an advantage to the students even though the playing field was not level. This frustrated the academics as they were sometimes unable to differentiate between those that deserved the high academic performance and those that simply associated themselves with the high achievers and plagiarised. This also inundated the academics with extra work of having to monitor the students' work closely for plagiarism.

A reason for students employing plagiarism could be that traditional contact universities are not up to speed with online teaching and learning, and both academics and students are not well versed with how to conduct university business in the distance mode (Guardia, 2016; Maringe, 2020). This underscores the need for academics to receive added training and guidance in working with the new 'normal' or the different mode of teaching that the universities are finding

themselves in. Adopting a hybrid model of teaching and learning could maybe assist in limiting the trends observed thus far. Teaching could be carried out online while assessments could be done in contact, as long as strict adherence is given to Covid-19 protocols.

I now move to discussing the theme of longing for contact classes, which came up during data generation.

5.2.7 THEME 7: LONGING FOR CONTACT CLASSES

As a result of the many challenges associated with emergency remote teaching, such as plagiarism, connectivity issues, low student attendance, and other technical related issues; some academics found themselves longing for contact classes as opposed to emergency remote teaching. For some, contact classes were a safe haven or a 'comfort zone' where they could control all the variables within the teaching environment. It was evident that, with emergency remote teaching, there were many uncontrollable variables which caused academics to experience frustrations and a sense of being stagnant in the progress of their modules.

> *You can't begin to compare the two (online and face-to-face). When you teach online, you talk to your laptop, you're talking to your laptop no students, no energy. You know when you stand in front of your class in a lecture hall, you feed off their energy. There are a lot of dynamics and a lot can happen in your lecture that contributes towards making a lecture interesting and challenging as opposed to speaking to your screen where you can't see a single face. (Sizwe)*

Sizwe's' comment suggests that the two modes of teaching, contact teaching and remote teaching are not comparable. What he experienced with emergency remote teaching lacked in terms of the energy and interactions between the students and himself. He felt that the online mode lacked engagement and led to uninteresting lectures as the conversation was often one sided.

> *I wasn't totally against the idea, but I had some reservations, maybe because I am a traditional teacher because I believe that face to face teaching is the best because that's where you can get that contact with the student. You engage in different activities, tutorials and all those things. Whereas, with this online teaching it is just them there and me here, so it's more like speaking to the*

unseen. I'm not seeing them and they're also not seeing me. So, the eye contact and the contact itself, body language and stuff is lacking with online teaching. (Sindisiwe)

Sindisiwe's comment above reveals that for her, as a traditional teacher, there are some indicators she used to gauge whether her lesson was successful or not in the face-to-face mode. With emergency remote teaching, this was absent, as she could not see the students' facial expressions, which indicated whether they were enjoying the lesson or uncomfortable with a certain concept. With teaching language methodology, there were certain things that she could not perform with students to get an accurate feel of their performance in the module. Although she was not totally against emergency remote teaching, she relied more on her traditional face-to-face lectures.

Further to this, Sindisiwe mentioned that contact lessons were particularly important when demonstrating certain concepts to students, which could not be done online considering the connectivity issues and data available for the students.

It's not about theorising what is more important is practical and you need to be doing the tutorials together, to be showing them the resources, showing them how to develop the resources for teaching young children and all those things. (Sindisiwe)

Moreover, the above was one of the participants in the computer science discipline made an interesting speculation on the importance of contact, even though his module did not particularly need contact. He expressed that contact played a vital role in assessing a students' shortcomings in terms of understanding the module content and gauging their progress overall. He explained this in the quote below.

There is no set online pedagogy, every class is different, every student is different but there are some aspects that cannot be perceived like body language if their video is turned off. If you are in a classroom environment, you can pick up if the student is feeling uncomfortable or struggling and you can see that you need to intervene and help the student. (Kevin)

Although the longing for contact classes was a common theme for most of the academics, it was well worth noting that some of the academics thought that higher education

institutions would benefit from using the hybrid model for teaching. A hybrid model in teaching and learning refers to an alternating presentation mode, where class meetings alternate between physical face-to-face sessions and online activity component (Tabor, 2007).

> *I believe that the future of HE learning is not going to be 100% contact. It will shift towards being hybrid because Covid has taught us that a lot can be done in a safer way however, with teacher training you cannot just leave it as online or remote. Teacher training is about being there, being present being a part of the lesson, being engaged, speaking that's important. Maybe if we were developing computer science graduates and any other field, I would say yes, fully online teaching would work but not for teachers. Teachers need to have some online and some contact lessons and to also come and practically teach their peers. So, teaching has to be done on a hybrid model to help us in times of pandemics and protest actions. (Priyanka)*

In the above quote, Priyanka suggests that adopting a hybrid model for teaching and learning could help bridge the gap experienced by some of the academics. Academics had to conform to Covid-19 protocols of social distance in order to curb the spread of the virus, and were in constant fear for their lives. Therefore, a hybrid model could assist for minimising contact between academics and students but, also fulfil the module requirements where contact is needed such as practical sessions. This would also prove beneficial when there are protest actions and teaching and learning disturbed.

On her closing comments, Sindisiwe was also in support of hybrid model of teaching and learning. She proposed that a blended method of teaching should be adopted, which is also a combination of contact classes and online classes as well. This was because her discipline required some contact between the student and the lecturer, as the module had a practical component to it.

> *What I could say is that ERT is not the way to go more especially in the undergrad programs. And again, I think that we should have at least blended learning maybe there should be some aspects taught online and some taught in contact mode. I'm saying that because I am teaching a method module, they have to see me, I have to see them in order to show them what to do. But if we are*

doing the theoretical part then that's where I can be doing it online, so that is my take. (Sindisiwe)

The findings above emphasize the importance of contact between the student and the lecturers. Even though ERT proves to be helpful in times of pandemics, it is still evident that contact is needed to safeguard against loosing certain important aspects of teaching and learning, mainly; communication, demonstration, and facial expressions indicating mood or understanding of subject matter.

I now turn to introducing the eighth theme, mainly on the trauma of emergency remote teaching.

5.2.8 THEME 8: THE TRAUMA OF ERT

Another theme that came up from the data generation was that of trauma brought on by emergency remote teaching. Trauma was, not only present in the form of loss or health issues associated with Covid-19 pandemic, but also seen as the academics experienced unforeseen situations students experienced as a result of their home contexts and inabilities to complete certain tasks. Literature suggests that from a critical perspective, the situations within which the students found themselves needed to be understood within the social contexts in which they lived and worked, where priorities might not give precedence to academic ones (Pillay et al., 2021). This was problematic, as academics were on tight deadlines and had to meet their targets and set key performance areas.

Sizwe, Kevin and Palesa felt a sense of immense pressure on them. They had to produce work according to their key performance areas, while trying to maintain their deadlines. This was particularly stressful as the participants had to juggle these time constraints along with the changing needs of the students, who were extending their deadlines due to the situations they were facing.

There is too much admin, too little teaching and probably very little learning as well, if any at all. We are just chasing numbers, chasing dead-lines, we want to meet objectives that would not have been properly achieved. So, we are just ticking boxes. (Sizwe)

In the above quote, Sizwe felt a sense of frustration towards the institutions' system. He was of the impression that the deadlines set were unrealistic considering the amount of

added work they had, which could have resulted in him not achieving his module objectives.

> *Prior to this we used to have the supplementary exams now we have the catch up so students who didn't do their assignment we give them an opportunity to catch up now, hand in an assignment and it's obviously put a strain on us as well.*

In addition to Sizwe's comment above, Kevin also felt strained. He experienced an unexpected increase in his workload, which was caused by students' dragging their feet at times for submission of assessments.

> *Very little time was given to us to prepare, and we had to perform our tasks accordingly while also experiencing challenges of our own. So, this put added stress on me as academic and on my ability to perform and I found myself repeatedly practicing my recordings before doing a final video to ensure that I had done my work properly. This made me lose out on family time and my studies as well. I pushed on, nonetheless. (Palesa)*

Palesa in the quote above suggests that academics were also experiencing some personal difficulties but had to continue with their work as though all was normal. For her, this affected her socially, mentally and also in her personal academic goals.

Academics also had to be empathetic towards situations that students were facing during the time of the pandemic. Academics found that students came from different social backgrounds and home contexts which impacted the way in which they performed their tasks and assessments, which meant the playing field was not level for all of them. They therefore, had to exercise a certain degree of compassion and understanding towards the students. Although some students were prone to laziness, there were a few students who had genuine excuses. Some of the students had no resources or were living in deeply rural areas with no connectivity to the internet and had to travel long distances to get connected. Some were living with many family members in small households that were not conducive to learning or even participating in Zoom meetings. Some students had chores that could infringe on the time they set aside for studying purposes. This was a challenge for them that led to not performing adequately in their assessments and tasks.

For example, Katlego commented on the shortage or non-existence of resources in the quote below.

> *The issue of resources was and is still a serious issue. Maybe if institutions can make sure that students go back to residence or those who don't have resources go back to residence. Those who have been funded can stay at home, but it should be that people can be closer to resources because the truth of the matter is that not all students have smart phones. Yes, they have been sent data but are you sure that that data is being used? What if their phone does not use data how do you access learning material? Students can be taken back to residences where they will have access to WIFI, LAN and access to computers. It can be optional, those who don't have access to resources they can be given their permits and allowed back. Some of the students can have access but not the space as we live in different home contexts, how am I going to study? The space is not conducive for studying. (Katlego)*

Katlego was of the opinion that students should have been allowed to return to the institution to ensure that every student had access to resources and network connections. He thought that students not having such resources and living in spaces not conducive to studying could have negatively affected their ability to study and perform well.

One of the academics was particularly skeptical of students' excuses prior to an experience which hit home for her and changed her mindset. She generally thought that students were lazy and did not care about the outcomes of non-performance. However, one encounter with a student who was experiencing the worst made her change her mind and evaluate carefully the reasons or excuses she would not consider going forward.

> *We have students who will never do their best because of laziness, and then we have those who genuinely try but they have valid reasons for non-performance. From my perspective working from a distance, we can't even see or let them explain for themselves when there's a genuine problem or when it's just a lie. And also, what I have learnt is that "never ever assume" anything. If a student says I can't do something, always give the student the benefit of the doubt. The reason I'm saying this is because I had student that passed away in 2020 and she was sick. After she passed away, I found out that she had corresponded with me about*

her issues and when I read one of my responses. Let us be kind because we don't know where our students are coming from what challenges they are facing. Never assume that a student is always lying or is always wrong because there are genuine excuses. We need to be humane in all of this and that care cannot be taken away when teaching, especially during the pandemic since we can't speak face to face we can still put care in our words and how we respond to the emails. We are accountable for our words. This pandemic has taught us to be humane and take care. (Priyanka)

Priyanka's' encounter with a certain student, who had passed on after giving varied excuses as to why she was not showing commitment to her work, shows that academics should be compassionate. They should show a sense of empathy towards students as they may be genuinely experiencing challenging issues in their lives, which may result in them not performing. She also added that a certain degree of care should be displayed or shown to students, especially in times like the COVID-19 pandemic.

So, I have made effort to reach out to them, but I don't get a response from them. I always try and drop an email to check on students as many things are happening, even to us as academics and you'd be surprised when the student tells you about a challenge they have been having and it is a genuine problem. (Kevin)

Kevin also concurred with the statement made by Priyanka and continued to state that efforts must be made by academics to keep in touch with students to check on them and their well-being during crisis times.

The findings reflect the need for change of attitudes among academics. Not only must their attitudes change, but they need to adopt a sense of care for students and the challenges they may be facing as a result of the different home contexts. It must also be equally recognised that not all students have access to resources, and so will sometimes have inherent problems with submissions and access to study materials, and should therefore, either be provided with means to help them gain access to the university resources for better performance. Implementation may take some time but with determination of the academics and the suitable stakeholders concerned, matters can be improved to level the playing field for all students.

I now discuss the last theme that formed part of the data generation; the advantages of ERT.

5.2.9 THEME 9: SOME ADVANTAGES OF ERT

The data generated suggests that even though academics experienced challenges throughout the emergency remote teaching, there were also some positives that could be drawn from these experiences. Most higher education institutions have leveraged on the advantages brought on by technology and the internet to enhance teaching and learning regardless of student or lecturers' location (Maphalala & Adigun, 2021). The advantages of ERT were revealed from the data generated during the semi-structured interviews.

The use of various applications such as Zoom, WhatsApp and Moodle can be considered an advantage. These applications have made communication between academics and students easier. They have also necessitated the need for academics to engage in training in order to empower them and effect transformation. This can be seen in how some of the academics reflected on the positive impact of the ERT. Sindisiwe, Priyanka, Palesa, Katlego, and Kevin commented below on how ERT impacted their teaching and learning.

> *We have an advantage that we store our electronic copies, so moving that from being printed and being given out to students manually and moving that to online, that wasn't a problem. It was easy to do it. (Sindisiwe)*

Sindisiwe found that moving material online made her work easier as the course material could be easily disseminated to the students via the different platforms of communication with students, for example Learn 2021.

> *I think it was strange for everyone, not in a bad way because sometimes new things open new opportunities because we never knew we can teach online, so it was learning curve for some of us.*

The academic above approached the changes with an open mind. Katlego felt that these changes presented them with new opportunities and was also an opportunity for them, as academics to further learn and acquire new skills so that they can embrace emergency remote teaching.

A colleague and I, because of the large numbers we had in our class, I think we were sitting on 1300/1400 students, so we to thought for ourselves, we cannot have assessments that are going to need a lot of admin. Instead, we can have multiple choice or quizzes as assessments, where the system will mark the student. (Katlego)

Katlego further added that for him and a colleague, it was also a way to be strategic and optimise the way they were working. The large class numbers and a somewhat carte blanche that academics had over the way they delivered and assessed the modules, led to collaborations amongst the academics to achieve a similar goal while decreasing the workload on themselves. This effectively saved academics time which they could then spend on consultations or other activities that needed more attention. Collaborations were similarly noted when academics with more advanced technological background assisted those that needed the help with certain aspects of technology.

Participants Katlego and Priyanka both experienced positives with student participation and they commented as follows:

I think it also gave some students the confidence to actually say that you know what, I cannot open my video, but I can talk because some people are shy to talk while there are physical lectures but now because no one is sitting with them and judging them they will be free to engage. So, that was the highlight of online learning it was productive because people who never talk in class, they were able to talk because there was no one judging them or their English and so on. (Katlego)

In the quote above, Katlego noted an improvement in students' confidence and participation in class discussions because they could engage freely without fear of being judged. The interactions were overall productive, and made their experience of emergency remote teaching enjoyable.

What I'm doing right now is synchronous Zoom meetings and I am getting them to attend although not all of them and they are amazingly interactive and that's what I like instead of me speaking to the computer screen. What I also do is I record the session, the interaction and I upload it on Learn 2021 and it's going

well, I'm getting good reports from the students they're enjoying the lectures and I feel it's the next best thing to contact, it's working well. I feel that using all the skills I learnt over the past almost 2yrs, I would almost prefer this method as face-to-face lectures are always disruptive, we can never be in a place where we can teach without disruptions. (Priyanka)

Priyanka was impressed with the student interactions during emergency remote teaching. She reported to have received positive feedback from the students based on how they are interacting with the module material. The skills she acquired over the pandemic period, through training and through trial and error enabled her to give better lessons than when she had physical classes.

There was a vast number of successes with the emergency remote teaching, which meant that lessons could be learned from this and changes effected so that emergency remote teaching does not have to be overwhelming for academics. The dominant feeling still remains that most academics had challenges with the ERT.

5.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter began with a discussion and analysis of themes. The findings showed that academics had many challenges with emergency remote teaching, particularly during the implementation stages. However, as they transitioned through ERT, some of the inherent tasks became easier for some of the academics, while other academics showed reluctance to adapt to the changes. The themes identified were; the unplanned sudden beginning of ERT, increased workloads and short timelines, the importance of technical support, lack of class attendance, plagiarism, high student academic performance, longing for contact classes, trauma of ERT and some advantages of ERT.

In the following chapter, I turn to theorising the findings of the study regarding what they mean for the field broadly.

CHAPTER SIX

THEORISING THE FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter, I detailed, interpreted and analysed the various themes that emerged from the transcribed data that I collected from the interviews. In this chapter, I seek to critically discuss and justify the use of the interpretive analysis in the study as previously mentioned in the theoretical chapter of this study. I firstly provide the discussion of the lifeworld of academics and their personal lived experiences of the emergency remote teaching (ERT) in the higher education context. After which, I continue to the discussion of the academics' intentionality as they navigated their way through ERT. I thereafter, discuss noema-neosis in relation to intentionality, mainly focusing on how the academics subjectively and objectively relayed their experiences of ERT.

Lastly, I demonstrate, how I have used the process of bracketing during the semi-structured interviews and analysis of the data generated to eliminate any preconceived notions and information that I had about ERT, so that the body of work represents the objective views of the academics.

6.2 LIFEWORLD OF ACADEMICS

As mentioned in the theoretical framings chapter, phenomenology was used as a framework that underpins this study, in order to explore, gain insight and interpret the meanings from the perspectives of those who have experienced it (Finlay, 2010; Koopman, 2018). The lifeworld is a term used to describe our world as we experience it. Finlay (2012) points out that the lifeworld is a blended approach that explores how daily experiences manifest in the lives of individuals through consideration of selfhood, sociality, embodiment, temporality, and spatiality. Simply put, this means that lifeworld details the experiences of people as they are, their way of life, where they live, and how these experiences affect them and their surroundings.

In keeping with the above analysis, the lifeworld theme details the experiences of the academics specifically in their personal lives, how they navigated their way through ERT, and the challenges and successes that this ‘new normal' imposed on them. In this context, the lifeworld also encompasses the academics’ physical and emotional states, and the formal and informal

lessons they had to quickly learn from to ensure that at the end of the phenomenon they retained their jobs and that the institutional goals were met. The previous chapter data showed that the academics presented feelings of exhaustion, anger, empathy, disempowerment and/ or powerlessness. The academics also showed a sense of being overwhelmed at times and under prepared for the journey they were to embark on. This is evident in their responses from the data generation, "*I still don't feel prepared. Maybe it's a personal thing, but I just don't like online teaching. (Sizwe)*

Sizwe further revealed how the use of ERT, its methods and the lack of in-contact teaching made him feel disempowered. He felt that ERT was directly contributing to the declining quality of education, and he felt powerless because he could not find ways to improve the situation. He was of the opinion that the main aim of the institution pushing for ERT was to achieve its numbers without considering the impact it would have on the educational system in future.

> *I think we are fooling the world, I think institutions are fooling the world, I don't know who we are fooling. Like I'm saying there is no proper teaching. Makes me very angry about the upcoming generations but I feel nothing can be done. I love teaching, but what I am doing now is not teaching at all, I don't know what it is! So, if we are not teaching, I wonder if there is any learning taking place at all. (Sizwe)*

Empowerment, like morale, is linked to feelings of autonomy and control, and opportunities to contribute to organisational growth and development (Dunn, 2020), and the opposite of this was experienced by the academics during the pandemic.

Another participant further attested to the previous participants' experience as he also had feelings of powerlessness when he looked at the indirect contribution that ERT was having in aiding the students achieve good results but feared for their competency in the real world.

> *the funny thing about it is student performance is high and that's a positive for the institution, but you as an individual you know that no way if it was contact learning that people would get 80% or 90%. On paper, the institutions are having great results. It is*

something positive for the institution. No matter how difficult your questions can be, they will always have a way around it. So, for us it's not a great feeling as a lecturer. So, you can see that there is a shift or maybe there is something, maybe online is for students or its good for students but now the problem is the future, the people whom they are going to teach because the after-effect will be felt by you teachers at school. The learners who are going to be taught by these teachers, will they have content, will they understand what they will be teaching? Yes, the institution can produce 100% pass rate in the fourth year because of online, but what about on ground when they get to the field. Are they competent enough? Do they know what they are teaching, or do they think they will still be popular as they were on campus?" (Katlego)

Sindisiwe, was empathetic of the calibre of the future teachers that would be produced by the institution, as they proved to be inadequately trained as a result of the lack of contact teaching that was adopted through ERT.

"*They are half baked loaves of bread and I feel sorry for them" (Sindisiwe).*

Furthermore, academics had to be strong and brave through the fears they were harbouring within them. These were mainly fears of the unknown, being unprepared for the opportunities and threats that came with ERT. Priyanka expressed that;

I was a bit nervous in the beginning because it meant uhm, it was a big change for me and it took me months to adjust. I think I became better, it was really difficult year for me because then I registered for my PhD, so it meant juggling lectures, PhD, and also working on the development of a degree program of Early Childhood…" .

Katlego also revealed similar feelings of fear of the unknown and stated;

There was still that fear, like fear of anything that is new. There will always be that doubt of will I be able to make it but at the end of the day it had to be done and you thinking maybe these students are taking screenshots of me or are they recording me, all those fears and being online. But funny enough, maybe we don't see them, but they never did do all those things, they were disciplined as if they were in a normal class/contact class…."

From the above analysis and discussion, it was apparent that the complex and challenging lifeworld of these academics was characterised by mixed feelings about ERT as they navigated their new normal. The analysis further helps us to understand what their lifeworld encompassed, and lessons they learnt along the way. Their experiences may not have been known prior to the study. However, it was revealed that through exposure to these challenges, they were able to grow technologically and personally, and this was achieved mostly through the support received from the institution and other colleagues.

Having discussed the lifeworld of the academics, it is imperative to probe further into the intentionality of the academics and how their preconceived knowledge and ideas affected the way they experienced ERT. Intentionality can be used to understand and explain the participants' stance of purposefully performing a certain action while also being fully conscious of their actions. In the next section, I discuss the participants' direct behaviour or actions that I analysed during data analysis stage. Specifically, what the participants purposefully engaged in to ensure that they navigate ERT successfully.

6.3 INTENTIONALITY OF THE ACADEMICS DURING ERT

In the theoretical chapter, I discussed that intentionality in phenomenology pertains to the act of being deliberate when one experiences a certain phenomenon. Intentionality is described as an ability to carry out activities that an individual has committed to (Ashworth, 2003, pp. 148150). Furthermore, Christensen *et al.* (2017) asserts that intentionality can be understood to be the human minds' ability to refer to objects outside of itself. Simply put, intentionality refers to the ability of the mind to go beyond abstract thoughts reaching or exploring with objects or subjects. Intentionality is thus, the embodied consciousness used to analyse a certain phenomenon (Howard & Bussell, 2018).

In the data generated, academics were conscious of the changes that the pandemic presented, and they had to make decisions with regards to re-forming/ re-thinking/ re-considering the way in which they traditionally taught before the pandemic. Prompt strategies had to be effected to enable teaching and learning to continue. This was evident from some of the responses of the participants;

> *Opting for WhatsApp wasn't by choice. There were situations that were compelling me to do it. You'll find that with Zoom as I started with Zoom in 2020, I had 206 students*

that's not a large number, it was so difficult to control. Secondly, they did not attend, I would send them the Zoom link and maybe I will end up with about 10 or 12 students. So, I thought that maybe this is somehow not working to my advantage as well as theirs. That is why I decided that I will use WhatsApp for recordings and sometimes if it's a large file I would use Kaltura or use Zoom to send those files. (Sindisiwe)

For other academics, it meant, not only changing from face-to-face teaching to remote teaching, but also changing the curriculum delivery methods. This was crucial to getting all students interacting with study material and even accessing it regardless of the challenges they may have with data, connectivity and resources. They therefore, made deliberate efforts to modify the content to online mode for it to be easily accessible and also make it user friendly. This manifested itself when some of the participants revealed;

We had to change our module templates and the school had sent us through with new templates, so we had to change our templates and make changes. So, we had planned when we started semester one everything was on track and then boom. We had to also become familiar with things like making videos and uploading those videos onto Moodle. It also meant how do we ensure that our students are engaged? Are they just completing the assessments and not engaging in any of the material? (Priyanka)

In that case I then thought of creating short 3 min or 5min video clips, like if I were to teach a four-loop structure, I would do a 4 or 5 three minute clips post that up on the Moodle system and the students who don't make it to the live sessions because it was a challenge to get everyone to the live sessions. (Kevin)

After 2 lectures we decided to record, and we'd record like a 10min slide upload it and then another 10 so that they don't finish their data. So, you couldn't just upload a one hour lesson, had to be reduced to 10minutes." (Katlego)

The academics had to make conscious efforts to maintain student engagement, which played a pivotal role in the eventual success in academic achievement of the students. Academics had to make concerted efforts as they were fully aware of their new environment, which was governed by contactless teaching and learning, These posed challenges of non-attendance and inferior student engagement. This then contributed to the academics devising strategies to

control the student engagement and attendance. One of the participants elaborated on this as follows;

> *Moving from asynchronous to synchronous and attaching an activity to every topic I teach and complete and a mark will go towards the year. Those were the two things that kept students fully involved. So, what I learnt is that, at the beginning, I used to have little assignments after each topic and they never used to do them, only 5 or 10 did them. This was because it never carried marks, so 20% of this was for engagement and suddenly everybody was doing all the tutorial tasks. They had to do them in groups where they had to correspond with each other because I had learnt that individual work did not help teacher training. We need team players, social skills, and people who are able to communicate and share and also people who are able to delegate responsibility and take up the different roles and responsibilities and negotiate that. So, I made the activities group work, and they had to find people they could work with because they did not know each other because they were online. Getting them to collaborate with one another was also a way of developing them in terms of social skills. This was to ensure that they are engaged. (Priyanka)*

The above comment further suggests that the academics acted deliberately in order to achieve their end goal, which was mainly to ensure no student gets left behind especially, during the time of the novel corona virus. More importantly, some of the participants mentioned that they had to adopt a certain level of care when dealing with students. Most students came from various backgrounds where they were exposed to different economic and social situations, which significantly added to their poor performance and sometimes non-performance. Some of the students were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic personally and within their homes, which led academics to realising that not all excuses made for non-performance were arbitrary or untrue. Hence, they adopted what I would call an ethics of care approach to handle such matters.

> *…there are students who do badly mostly because of no communication from their side, they don't join the online classes. You send them a message or email saying that I haven't seen you in my class or I haven't heard from you, but I get no response. So, I have made effort to reach to them, but I don't get a response from them. I always try and drop an email to check on students as many things are happening, even to us as academics and you'd be surprised when the student talks about a challenge they have*

been having, and it is a genuine problem. And, with some students who exploit this you can see from their performance in every module and constant problems or excuses they will have maybe throughout 5 modules they will be doing. Their performance is then evidence of their input into their work. The students who do well they are constantly engaging, asking questions and you will see it in their performance in assignments and quizzes, they will still perform well." (Kevin)

We have students who will never do their best because of laziness and then we have those who genuinely try but they have valid reasons for non-performance. From my perspective working from a distance, we can't even see or let them explain for themselves when there's a genuine problem or when it's just a lie. And also, what I have learnt is that never ever assume anything, if a student says I can't do something always give the student the benefit of the doubt." (Priyanka)

An ethics of care approach refers to the concept of care as a moral attitude and a basic aspect of human nature, and places human relationships at its centre (Noddings, 2002). Simply put, ethics of care refers to an attitude that an individual must adopt while interacting with other people. This attitude provides a moral basis that forms the foundation of human interaction, and suggests that there is an interdependence needed for the care approach to be successful (Diller, 1988). Noddings (1984) found that ethics of care particularly resonated with women as such ethics placed an emphasis on care, nurture, and human connections and responsibility. However, one may argue that during the trying times of the COVID-19 pandemic, this approach would have been important to any gender and not just women, to show a sense of humanity and consideration for each other in situations of trauma, grief and/ or loss.... The above analysis made clear the deliberate efforts that academics had to make, without which the traverse through the phenomenon would have been unsuccessful. In summary, these were mainly; improving the way in which curriculum or modules were delivered, opening effective communication channels for students to voice their problems and keeping the students engaged. These efforts would have been especially unsuccessful had there been no support structure from their supervisors and other stakeholders who were again deliberate about their actions as well. The intentionality possessed by the academics enabled them to negotiate their way through ERT and the pandemic. It can be argued further that the academics would not have achieved

intentionality without noema-neosis, which is a dual phenomenological concept with intentionality while traversing through ERT in the South African university.

6.4 THE NOEMA-NEOSIS OF ACADEMICS DURING ERT

In the section on the theoretical chapter, I explained that noema is taken from the Greek word Nous, which is a term applied for referring to mind and intellect with the meaning of an act (Rassi & Shahabi, 2015). The Noesis root is the Greek verb of Nosin, which means to comprehend, ascertain and ruminate. Husserl considers Noesis as meaning giving stratum of experience. Noesis gives meaning to the intentional act, and Noema is a meaning which is given to intentional act. Moreover, Cilesiz (2011) as cited in (Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015) explains that noema refers to the object of the action such as the perceived, the felt, the thought, the remembered, the judged; while noesis refers to the act of experience: such as perceiving, feeling, thinking, remembering or judging. Together noema and noesis make up the conscious, which constitutes the perceptions, thoughts, feelings, judgements of an experience. Noema and noesis are thus, interrelated and cannot exist independently or be studied without the other (Cilesiz, 2010).

Evidently, the terms noema and neosis, described by phenomenology can be explained differently to allow for a deeper understanding of a certain phenomenon. However, there is a strong link between noema and neosis and intentionality. Noema and neosis refer to an actual matter of act and that in turn gives it a special intentional character (Rassi & Shahabi, 2015). Therefore, noema and neosis correlate immediately with each other by virtue of the fundamental property of intentionality (Penchev, 2021). Noema and neosis for this study encompasses the different curriculum delivery methods, technological support, and the classroom management strategies adopted enabling for an improved learning experience using emergency remote teaching.

Sizwe noted that the large differences between face-to-face teaching and emergency remote teaching were too big to ignore, particularly when comparing the energies present in those environments. These energy differences demotivated him as he could not enjoy the feeling of excitement which he got from face-to-face teaching. This was evident when he commented; *You know when you stand in front of your class in a lecture hall, you feed off their energy there are a lot of dynamics and a lot can happen in your lecture that contributes towards making a*

lecture interesting and challenging as opposed to speaking to your screen where you can't see a single face. (Sizwe)

He evidently had to manage his classroom differently to maintain or keep himself interested and his students engaged. Therefore, the change in curriculum delivery from face-to-face to ERT had a ripple effect on student engagement, leading academics to further consider strategies on how they can maintain student engagement while also delivering the curriculum as expected by their superiors'. Hlatshwayo (2020) opines that the lockdown university resulted in academics being under pressure to move their teaching and learning material online, with the aim of ensuring that curriculum offerings continue at various universities. For some of the participants, it meant opting for shorter lessons, interactive videos and PowerPoint presentations, which were ultimately moved online. For instance, Sizwe mentioned that *"The only solution is to record your lectures, upload them so that students can find them whenever it suits them."*

In addition to the above, Sindisiwe highlighted that she had to deliberately cut her lessons short for fear that she would be encroaching on their network data and have access to other classes they needed to attend remotely because she would have depleted their data. This was revealed when she said the following;

…mind you, if you are conducting a lesson you are running against time because you think that for this lesson, the students needed to have so much data and if I'm wasting their time, it means they are going to deplete their data that they already have, and it means they won't be able to attend other classes. So, all the time you are thinking about the future, what is going to happen in the next course and so on. Whatever that you do you need to teach simple things." (Sindisiwe)

It was, not only about being intentional about their choice of curriculum delivery, but also the meaning behind the choice of curriculum delivery, especially what it meant for the people involved; in this case the students. Effecting these changes to the delivery methods also entailed engaging in training programs that would upskill them enabling the academics to make full use of technology provided to them which was intended to facilitate emergency remote teaching. It became apparent upon interviewing the academics, that there were many programmes offered to fully equip the academics with the skills they required, and these were offered by the

institution they were working for. This form of support was initially vital for the academics and later became inundated. This was evident when one of the participants responded by saying;

> *I think there were some sessions and when we were shifting there were a lot of engagements almost weekly. I remember one of our colleagues was in the U.S because he is one of the people who are experts in ICT, he had to wake up at around midnight that side and train us." (Katlego)*

Furthermore, Priyanka validates the point highlighted above as she had a similar comment pertaining to technical support;

> *There was a lot of support and training, but it was also about the amount of time and freedom you have to actually fully engage in the training. Because we still needed to produce lectures and lessons and we had marking to do. We can't always attend everything. There were numerous calls and invitations, and I did attend and it was quite beneficial because I would not have come this far without that kind of support especially at the beginning where we did not know how to make videos." (Priyanka)*.

To reinforce this, Husserl maintains Noesis as an actual content of experience, i.e. intentional meaning is pointed at an object specially and definitely. For this, it is called actual Noetic content of an act. Whereas Noema is referred to the intentional content of experience, i.e. its concrete correlate (Rassi & Shahabi, 2015). It is thus evident that noema and neosis co-exist with intentionality. Consciousness is always consciousness of an object (one cannot be conscious without being conscious of something), and the consciousness of an object requires a subject (Kockelmans, 1994; Moustakas, 1994). Since intentionality is a conscious act and requires one to be of sound mind before an act is performed, it can therefore, be reiterated that, in order for noesis to happen, it cannot be separated from a noema, as "any conscious act begins from the mind (noema) before one acts on it (noesis)" (Mokeona, 2021, p.123). It can be concluded that the academics were intentional about their actions and there was always meaning accompanying their actions. They were conscious of the role they needed to play to circumvent any adverse effects of the challenges and changes they were confronted with due to emergency remote teaching. This attributed to the conscious acts such as alternate curriculum delivery methods, change in classroom management techniques, and acquiring technological support and methods to heighten student engagement, all of which were student oriented and meant to improve student performance.

6.5 BRACKETING

Bracketing is a research method used by some researchers to mitigate the potential deleterious effects of unacknowledged preconceptions related to the research, and increase the rigor of the project (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Simply put, bracketing is used in research to avoid the researcher from coming into the data generation stage with prior knowledge, beliefs (herein referred to as preconceptions) to arrive at participants actual ideas about the phenomenon in question. When used correctly and with a focus on suspending judgement, the researcher can arrive at an intuitive understanding of the participants' subjective accounts of their lived experience (Dorfler & Stierand, 2020). Furthermore, bracketing out the preconceptions, beliefs, and values allows the researcher to keep an open mind and listen to the participant effectively.

Bracketing played a significant role for me in this study. It allowed me to listen with an open mind to the participants' responses to get their direct experiences without prompting any responses. As I was using semi-structured interviews which utilise open-ended questions, I sometimes had to probe the participants, asking follow up questions. This enabled me to arrive at rich descriptions and data of the academics' experiences. Most of the interviews were done virtually to adhere to Covid-19 social distancing protocols. This, therefore, meant that I had to ensure that I voice my interest if I agree and listen further to possibly interject with a follow up question when the participant had answered fully. It was especially important to withhold any prior knowledge and beliefs, to allow the participants to open up and contribute further to the rich data they were giving me.

6.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, I theoretically discussed the data collected in the semi-structured interviews. The chapter mainly focussed on discussing the experiences of the academics in terms of the phenomenological concepts such as the lived experiences, intentionality, the noema and neosis of the academics and lastly bracketing. Bracketing, in particular, was especially difficult to do, as I am both a teacher and a student currently experiencing first hand, some of the difficulties that the academics were presented with. This, therefore, made it difficult to disengage my prior knowledge going into the interviews, but it also allowed me to enter with an open mind and be able to gather rich data. Discussing these concepts individually contributed in my

understanding the rich data obtained from the academics' experiences of the emergency remote teaching during Covid-19.

The following chapter presents the summary, major findings, recommendations and the conclusion.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, MAJOR FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I presented, analysed, discussed and theorised the findings from the semi-structured interviews, underpinned by phenomenological approach. The main aim of the study was to critically explore academics' experiences of emergency remote teaching in a university in KwaZulu-Natal. The study sought to answer the following research questions:

- What are academics' experiences of the emergency remote teaching?
- How do academics' experience the emergency remote teaching?
- Why do academics' experience the emergency remote teaching in the way that they do?

This chapter presents the summary, major findings, recommendations and conclusion derived from the data analysis and discussions. It begins with a summary of each of the preceding chapters, followed by a discussion of the major findings and the recommendations made by this study, and the concluding remarks.

7.2 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTERS

This study explored the academics' experiences of emergency remote teaching in a South African university. The study comprised seven interconnected chapters, beginning with chapter one which consists of the overview, context and objectives. Chapter two covers the literature review, while chapter three details the theoretical framings which underpin this study. Chapter four details the research methodology used and chapter five and six discuss the findings and also give a theoretical discussion of the findings derived from the data generation stage.
Chapter seven presents the summary, major findings, recommendations and the conclusion.

7.2.1 Chapter One

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the study, outlining the title of the study, continuing with a brief introduction of the academics' experiences of emergency remote teaching. I then stated the focus of the study and its location within South Africa. The rationale of the study was given, highlighting my personal reasons for pursuing this study. The debates found in the literature about the phenomenon were discussed. Further to this, the study objectives were

outlined followed by the research questions, research design, and research methodology were covered. Finally, the chapter is concluded with an overview of the seven chapters.

7.2.2 Chapter two

This chapter presented the overview of the literature on academics' experiences of the emergency remote teaching and the different areas related to the study. It entailed a discussion on what emergency remote teaching is, by giving its definition and what sets it apart from online learning. The chapter further details the in-depth experiences of these academics, the challenges that they faced during emergency remote teaching, and how these hindered and sometimes promoted positive changes. The chapter is concluded by mapping the gaps in the field.

7.2.3 Chapter three

In this chapter, the theoretical framings which underpin the study were presented. An in-depth discussion on the significance of theory in research was given. The concept of phenomenology was discussed broadly in terms of its deep-seated roots in philosophy, it's history, the different types of phenomenology and the concepts that phenomenology centres around. Furthermore, these concepts were discussed in relation the study as a whole.

7.2.4 Chapter four

This chapter outlined the research methodology used in the research project. The main focus was on outlining the research methods, the research approach namely the qualitative approach, the research design (case study) and the data generation methods. Moreover, the chapter discusses how the participant selection took place and the criteria of the selection, along with data analysis that followed a thematic approach. Further to this, the ethical considerations are discussed and how concerns of trustworthiness were dealt with, and then the limitations of the study and how they were averted. The chapter ends with reflections on the academics' experiences.

7.2.5 Chapter five

In this chapter, the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews was presented. The chapter offered a detailed analysis of the data, which was thematically arranged to consolidate

the rich data from the participants' transcribed data. This allowed the data to exhibit patterns of similarity in the academics' experiences of ERT.

7.2.6 Chapter six

This chapter of the study entailed the theoretical discussion of the semi-structured interviews. This was made in relation to the concepts of phenomenology, namely; the lifeworld of the academics during ERT, their intentionality with ERT, noema and neosis, and bracketing, which enabled me to remove any bias I had starting the research to arrive at an accurate rendition of the academics' experiences of ERT.

7.3 Major Findings

7.3.1 The sudden beginning of ERT

It was revealed that most academics were challenged by the abrupt nature with which ERT began. They were initially affected by the unclear instructions of how ERT was to be carried out in their institution. These uncertain conditions led to anxiety, coupled with fear that clouded them because of the pandemic and the fact that they were not fully fledged in handling Information Communications Technology (ICT) at the time. To add on to their dilemma, the training programmes provided to them were not always accessible, mainly because of short notices, time clashes between classes and training, and some of the training infringing on their personal time. This impacted their ability to attend, leading them to remain with insufficient technological knowledge, That then compromised their ability to create quality content that would also maintain student engagement.

7.3.2 Increased workloads and short timelines

The introduction of ERT, although aimed at having a positive impact in higher education, had some negative repercussions. These involved the heavy increase in workloads for the academics as they had to firstly learn how engage with technology and thereafter, use the technology to create suitable content for online usage, prepare assessment materials that would, not only be valid and reliable, but also be free from plagiarism as students worked on them remotely and yield quality results. Among these challenges academics also had the task of disseminating work to students while taking into consideration connectivity issues, data shortages and student engagement with the uploaded material. Therefore, it was not merely

"dumping" the work onto suitable platforms, but also monitoring if students were receiving the content and doing the work. This resulted in emotional outbursts of anxiety, stress and digital fatigue as this was all expected to materialise in short timelines.

7.3.3 The importance of technical support

Academic institutions and academics alike soon discovered the importance of technical support. Institutions were aware of the challenges that academics were having, which prompted them to offer training and technical support to staff. It was not easy to get every academic to buy into the idea, as some academics were never accustomed to the use of technology and just felt it was a threat. It was therefore, important for academics to adopt an attitude of willingness and a change in perception of technology for the implementation of ERT to be successful. Academics had to be able to produce content that would be readily accessible online for students to engage with remotely. Since the support given was at times rushed and insufficient, academics formed communities of support to help each other learn certain programmes and ways of working remotely. Some academics admitted to the importance of these communities, and felt they would not have survived without support from their colleagues.

7.3.4 Lack of class attendance

From the academics' interviews, it was revealed that there was a sharp decline in class attendance. In classes of approximately 200 students, only 30 students would be present. This was largely due to lack of contact and students knowing there were no accurate attendance records being kept and no repercussions for non-attendance. Another reason for the decrease was that the Zoom application only allowed a certain number of participants, and other students could not be accommodated at times and lost interest. A major contributor to non-attendance was the issue of data. Data was depleted very fast when going online and observing a full lecture and they were unable to attend other classes or also download study materials uploaded. This also impacted their ability to submit the required tasks on time or even submit the task completely.

7.3.5 Plagiarism

Plagiarism was on the rise during the pandemic period. This proved to be a common challenge amongst the participants involved in the study. The academics observed the sharing of ideas or submission of identical work among the students. This raised concerns as it showed that

academic integrity had been compromised. The main contributing factor was the students' access to the internet while attempting an assessment and working in groups or using telephones to contact each other while doing the assessments remotely. This resulted in academics devising ways to monitor students remotely; for example, having them open their web cameras while writing as well as applications like TurnItIn, Dropbox and SafeAssign, which are designed to curb plagiarism.

7.3.6 High student academic performance

As a direct result of plagiarism, students showed very high levels of academic achievement. Some academics argued that some students were already showing high levels of achievement prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, and that their performance could not be attributed to plagiarism. Some academics were also of the notion that the high academic performance could be as a result of "massification", which is the influx of high numbers of students gaining access to higher education. Furthermore, they thought that students could have been receiving assistance or directly copying from the internet. One participant argued that high academic achievement could be attributable to students working at their own pace, in a relaxed environment, away from the tensions that arise in a classroom environment. However, participants pointed out that continued changes to assessments ensured that students received achievements equally reflective of their efforts.

7.3.7 Longing for contact classes

Due to most of the negative impact of ERT experienced by academics throughout the pandemic, for example the low class attendance and plagiarism, academics found themselves longing for contact classes; they longed for the interactions between the students and themselves that they had during face-to-face teaching, where they could feed off the energies of the students and maintain student engagement. The uncontrollable variables of the ERT led academics to be frustrated as there was little progression for their modules.

7.3.8 The trauma of ERT

The different experiences that academics were going through as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic led to some of the trauma mentioned in the study. This trauma was, not only related to loss or health related issues, but also emanated from the experiences that students were having. Some students were experiencing difficulties due to their social and economic

backgrounds, which may have led to decreased or non-performance academically. Academics had to adopt ethics of care, where they had to make contact with certain students to check on their non-performance. One participant reported to have been devastated at the news of a student passing away after constant failure to submit assessments. The participant had not realised that the student was not submitting because they were ill and unable to submit. This led her to considering a more humanitarian approach, exercising compassion and care by constantly checking on students when such cases arise. However, this negatively affected academics as they constantly had to extend deadlines to accommodate students, thereby not meeting their own targets.

7.3.9 Some advantages of ERT

The participants agreed that the use of Zoom, WhatsApp, and Moodle even after the pandemic would be advantageous to higher education, as they would make communications between students and academics easier. The transformative nature of ERT was noted as leading to the positive technological development of academics, which also played a role in empowerment. Another advantage was that the introduction of ERT had the ability to make lives easier in terms of material dissemination provided the students were given sufficient data. Moreover, ERT could be taken as an opportunity to create more time for consultation of students on a oneon-one basis. It was also another way that the institution could leave a cleaner carbon footprint and for future sustainability of primary resources. Academics noted an increase in the level of confidence among those students that engaged freely during ERT.

7.4 Suggestions for further research and Recommendations

7.4.1 Towards the smooth transition to emergency situations

The above findings suggest that, in order for universities to function in times of disarray or distress, there should be policies put in place to detail the operating procedures. However, the policies should be revisited yearly or as often as needed to check their feasibility and applicability to extraordinary situations. Having such policies in place will circumvent rushed introduction of programmes and training sessions. Moreover, this will reduce feelings of anxiety that are brought about by rapidly changing situations needing prompt adjustments within the institution. Focusing on the development of such policies would also need to include the development of programmes that will foster regular training sessions, empower academics

with the required skills, as well as ensure that the academics grow within the institution and can impart such skills willingly to either students or other academics.

7.4.2 Towards eradicating plagiarism

For the institution to preserve its position in the education sector as one of the leaders in higher education in terms of academic excellence, it needs to invest in applications or computer programs that can be used to detect and deter students from plagiarism. Without the proper software, plagiarism can be difficult to detect. This would guarantee the institution of unquestionable academic performance that also yields students of high calibre.

7.4.3 Towards bridging the distance between students and academics

Another recommendation would be the use of a blended approach in times of the pandemic. The institution can apply some face-to-face teaching in instances such as practical work or for modules requiring physical interaction and apply remote teaching for when the modules require theory. This can only happen under the safe observation of protocols, which, in this study, would be observation of non-pharmaceutical methods such as social distance and wearing of masks as well as pharmaceutical methods such as the administration of the Covid-19 vaccine. The theory part of the modules can be managed asynchronously by uploading information on Moodle, Dropbox or Google classroom and synchronously, where the communication can be scheduled over Zoom or other applicable applications. This would assist academics in bridging the gap of not having contact classes at all and possibly increase interactions with students and increase class attendance.

7.4.4 Towards technical training and support

The focus of technical support was only academics during the pandemic period, where they were provided with all the hardware such as Wi-Fi or routers, functioning laptops, and software related packages. However, there was a shifted focus for the students, which inhibited academics from fully accomplishing their duties. It is proposed that students also be offered firstly with some form of training towards the use of computers and to not assume that they have the knowledge of all applications they must utilise to complete their modules. Secondly, students need to be offered with the suitable hardware needed to access the different communication methods. Students come from different socio-economic backgrounds and it cannot be assumed that each student possesses a smart phone or a laptop with which they can

perform the requirements of ERT. Therefore, to ensure that the playing field is equal for all students, strategies should be devised ensuring every student a fair chance at achieving as much the next.

7.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The main aim of this study was to explore academics' experiences of the emergency remote teaching, and to understand how academics experienced emergency remote teaching, and why they experienced it in the way that they did. The focus was on detailing their experiences while gaining insight on their experiences by theorising their navigation through emergency remote teaching in a time of the Covid-19 pandemic. To accomplish this, the following research questions were asked; What are academics' experiences of the emergency remote teaching? How do academics' experience the emergency remote teaching? Why do academics' experience the emergency remote teaching in the way that they do?

Through the use of semi-structured interviews, in-depth descriptions of the experiences of emergency remote teaching were gathered. These, not only generated rich data, but also answered the research questions.

The main answers to these questions pointed out that academics experienced anxiety, uncertainty, and frustration towards the rapid shift to emergency remote teaching, and to the challenges that the shift presented. This suggested that the issues raised by the academics should be addressed timeously to avoid a repeat of such in the future leading to the smooth running of academic programs and averting the challenges that the academics posed. Offering support to academics wherever needed will enable the institution to be fully prepared for most unpredictable situations of emergency, such as emergency remote teaching.

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Annexure A: Ethical clearance

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

21 July 2021

Mr Mlamuli Hlatshwayo 59225
Ms Thabile Zondi
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Hlatshwayo and Mr Zondi

Protocol reference number: HSS/0240/019
Project Title: RE-centering and re-presenting students' and lecturers voices in the South African higher education curriculum and transformation discourses.

Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 18 June 2021 has now been approved as follows:

- Addition of co-investigators: Amanda Mbatha 200100456, Bongiwe Majozi 221116173, Bongiwe Ngcobo 208505717, Cheslynn Van De Merwe 984173687, Nkululeko Majozi 213510100, Daphene Pillay 216074163, Thobile Mabuza 214584579, Zamokuhle Magubane 214501893, Thobile Dlamini 221119575, Innocentia Alexander 212545769, Ayanda Ndlovu 212548717

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

[redacted]

.....
Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr A Pillay
cc School Administrators: Ms S Jeenarain, Ms M Ngcobo, Ms N Dlamini and Mr SN Mthembu

Appendix B: Consent Letter

University of Kwa Zulu-Natal
College of Humanities
School of Education
Curriculum Studies

Dear Prospective Participant

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

I am Amanda Mbatha, a Masters candidate at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Education. I intend doing research aimed at exploring academics' experiences of the emergency remote teaching in higher education. I would like to ask for your permission to participate in this research study. Should you agree, your participation in the study will be in the form of a semi-structured interview, which will be scheduled for an hour session or less. The times and dates of the session are negotiable to ensure that you are not inconvenienced in any manner.

Please note that:

- Your participation in this study is voluntary. Furthermore, you have a right to stop participating at any time. You will not be required to provide a reason for your withdrawal from the study, nor will there be negative implications resulting from your withdrawal.
- Any information that you share cannot be used against you, and the generated data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Confidentiality will be maintained through the use of pseudonyms when reporting the findings.
- The generated data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after five years.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes, and there are no financial benefits involved.

If you agree to participate in the interview session, please indicate (by ticking where applicable) whether you agree to the audio recording of the session OR not

	Willing	Not willing
Audio recording		

If you have any concerns or questions, please feel to contact me at:
E-mail: amandambatha08@gmail.com

Cellphone: 063 682 0758

My supervisor is Prof Mlamuli Hlatshwayo, located at the School of Education, Edgewood Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. His contact details are as follows:

Prof Mlamuli Hlatshwayo
E-mail: hlatshwayom@ukzn.ac.za
Tel: 031 260 3927

You may also contact the Research Office through:
Ms. Duduzile Dlamini
HSSREC Research Office administrator
E-mail: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za
Tel: 031 260 4557

Thank you for your contribution to this research study.

Annexure C: Email sent to participants to request participation

Dear Prospective Participant

Student number: 200100456
Research title: Exploring academics' experiences of the emergency remote teaching: A case study from the University of KwaZulu-Natal

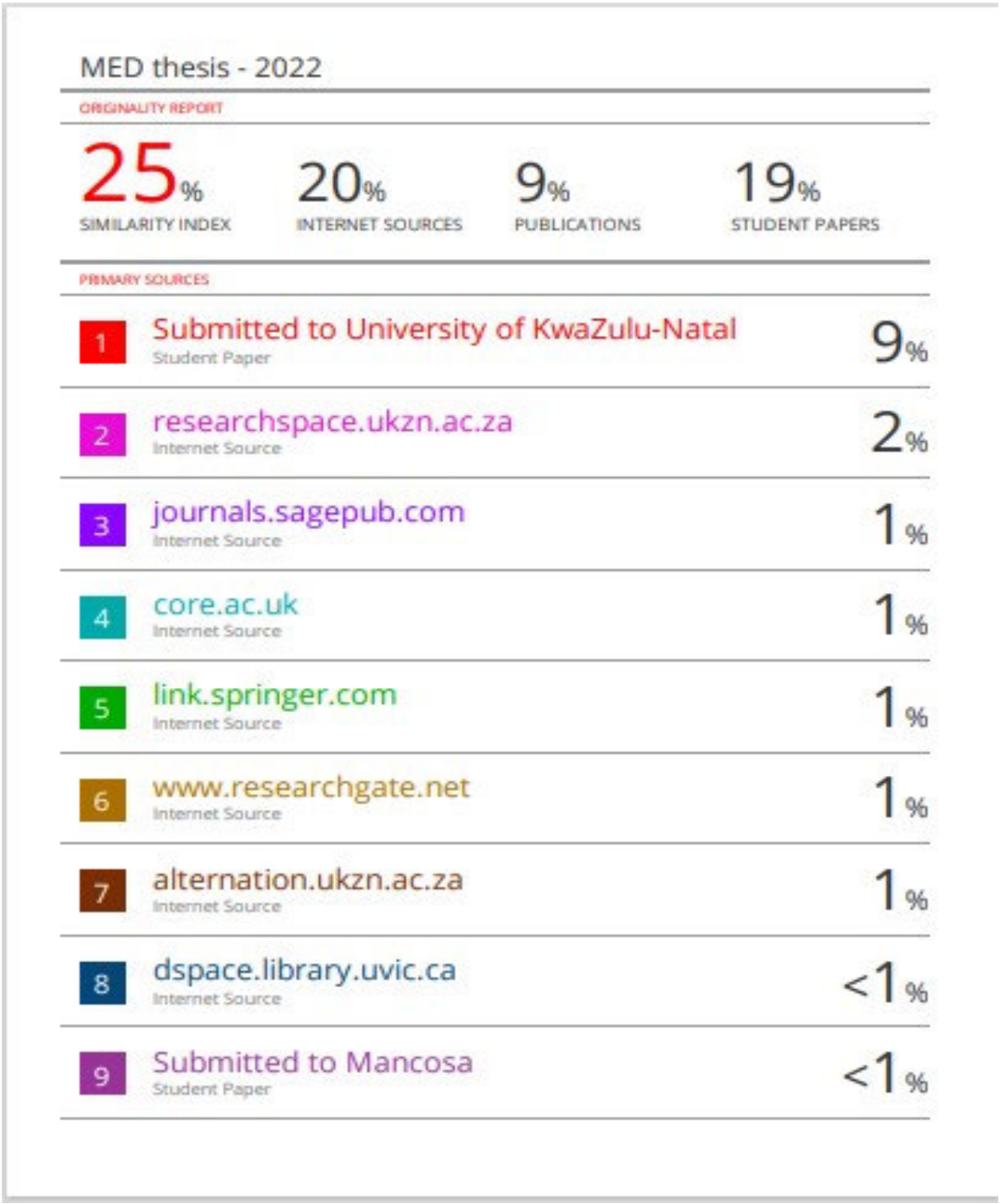
My name is Amanda Mbatha (200100456), and I am a Master's student in the discipline of Curriculum Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, School of Education. I am supervised by Prof MN Hlatshwayo. My study is on Exploring academics' experiences of the emergency remote teaching. I would like to invite you to be a participant in my study.

Should you be interested in taking part in the study, I have attached my approved proposal, group ethics and consent letters for your perusal.

Please let me know when you are able to avail yourself to take part in my research study. I am willing to work around your schedule. Please also indicate your most preferred method of communication between Zoom/Microsoft Teams/WhatsApp call for our interview. I will only require 45-60 minutes of your time.

Kind regards
Amanda Mbatha

Annexure D: Turn It in Certificate



MED thesis - 2022

ORIGINALITY REPORT

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PRIMARY SOURCES

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Annexure E: Language editor certificate

Dr Jabulani Sibanda
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16 August 2022

RE: CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING

To whom it may concern

I hereby confirm that I have proof read and edited the following DISSERTATION using Windows 'Tracking' System to reflect my comments and suggested corrections for the author(s) to action:

Exploring academics' experiences of emergency remote teaching: A case study from the University of KwaZulu-Natal

Reference

Authors:	Duduzile Amanda Mbatha
Student Number:	200100456
Affiliation:	University of KwaZulu-Natal

Although the greatest care was taken in the editing of this document, the final responsibility for the product rests with the author(s).

Sincerely

[redacted]

16.08.2022

SIGNATURE

Annexure F: Semi-structured interview schedule

Interview questions

Introduction

Good day Mr/Ms/Doc/Prof

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule and speaking to me today.

Background questions:

- Please tell me a bit about yourself. Why did you choose to be an academic? What influenced your decision?

Pre-teaching questions (administrative questions)

- What was the shift to online learning like for you as an academic?
- What were the administrative tasks related to your job? Was there additional administrative work when you taught during ERT compared to face to face?
- Do you feel you had enough time to prepare for ERT?
- How did you move your curriculum material online?
- Were you trained in online learning or ERT? If yes, how? If no, why?
- Did you feel prepared after the training you received?

Actual teaching and learning

- How did you integrate online management systems like (Zoom/Teams/Whatsapp etc.) in your teaching? Did it work?
- What was online teaching like for yourself? Were there any positives or negatives that you can draw from your experience?
- Can you give me a sense of the actual class/ seminar/ discussion? What did it entail?
- How did it differ from the physical classes?
- Was it challenging? fulfilling?
- What was student behaviour like?
- With regards to student participation and engagement, what was it like? and how did you maintain it?
- How did you enable student engagement in your class/seminars? Any strategies that you felt worked for you?

Assessment questions

- What was your assessment strategy? Did you use multiple choice questions, quizzes, short questions?

- Which assessment method did you feel worked for you, and which ones did you feel did not work? and why?
- What was the student performance like in the different assessments?

Concluding questions

- Is there anything that you felt I could have asked you, that I did not ask in this interview?

Thank you very much for taking time to do this interview. I gained a lot from our conversation and I am happy to have gotten this chance.