Humanising Online Teaching and Learning in the BEd. Foundation Phase Programme: Moving Beyond Covid-19

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Abstract

Covid-19 brought unforeseen and unpredicted challenges to higher education institutions (HEIs). In this paper, we recount the authors' experiences of exploring a humanising pedagogy as a way of practising social justice during online learning. Our Bachelor of Education, Foundation Phase (FP) classes consist of students from predominantly rural and urban low socioeconomic environments. The primary focus of this study was to explore the experiences of lecturers who teach a humanising pedagogy-embedded programme in the FP at an HEI through online learning in a highly under-resourced context. The study further focuses on technological strategies and pedagogies used in HEIs, issues related to lecturers' inclination and adaptation to technology, the digital divide, and barriers to online learning. This study resides within a critical transformative paradigm, and uses humanising pedagogy principles as a lens. We draw on our lived experiences and engage in dialogue to make sense of the process of online learning. In this qualitative research, we engage in narrative freewriting to gather data. Thematic analysis was used to reduce the data and to identify common themes. The two themes that emerged, and are discussed in this paper, are mutual vulnerability and lecturer resilience and collaboration. The findings of the study encouraged lecturers to critically reflect on the challenges and opportunities that Covid-19 presented, and to incorporate some of the practices that enabled better delivery of teaching in a humanising way.

Keywords: humanising pedagogy, technology, narrative freewriting, mutual vulnerability and poetic enquiry

Introduction and Background

As higher education institutions (HEIs) navigated the 21st century, we found ourselves faced with a global crisis. This crisis was based on the Covid-19 pandemic, which demanded rapid advances in science and technology, and the polarised growth of online learning as a consequence. The impact of the pandemic has been very difficult yet life changing as lecturers rushed to put in place practical temporary and immediate solutions for distant and online teaching and learning.

Covid-19 succeeded in unsettling every bit of certainty and the course, Bachelor of Education (BEd.) Foundation Phase (FP) was no exception; face-to-face learning came to a grinding halt as contact sessions were offered online. The FP department scraped to focus and create teaching strategies and modes of learning that would sufficiently sustain and encourage teaching via a distance, online platform. Lecturers' challenges with online learning were now magnified. It was possible for others to see their shortcomings when it came to online platforms. This was especially evident among lecturers living in rural areas—they struggled without access to proper digital devices and with very poor internet connectivity.

As distressing and demanding a period as that was, it also ushered in a belated and much welcomed renaissance and transformation of our teaching and learning spaces. The pandemic was a great eye-opener for many role-players, giving them a better grasp of the vulnerabilities and shortcomings in our HEIs in South Africa. It has highlighted how crucial it is for our lecturers to be technologically literate to work, perform, and develop in a world in which social distancing, greater digitising of facilities, and more digitally engaged information might gradually become the custom. Essentially, Covid-19 resulted in us challenging our own ideas and concepts of when, where, and how we deliver education.

Technological Teaching Practices Used in HEIs in SA During the Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic and its impact arrived abruptly, with little to no preparation plans in place globally, and in South Africa, especially. All sectors, including education, were greatly affected by the pandemic (Mpungose, 2020). More specifically, HEIs were required to temporarily shut down, which resulted in a need for different ways of ensuring that teaching and learning happened in our effort to salvage the academic year (Landa et al., 2021; Magubane, 2020). In South Africa, technological teaching practices presented numerous benefits and challenges to lecturers. Landa et al. (2021) postulated that education in emergencies, as experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic, relies extensively on basic technological access, and basic access to technology was the most significant challenge for HEIs. In the context of initial teacher education, lack of access to devices such as laptops and computer tablets hindered lecturers from reaching many of their students (Mpungose, 2020).

To respond to this, faculty members had to arrange and deliver their lectures remotely (Hodges et al., 2020) with the support of various learning management systems, course management systems, and

virtual learning environments—depending on the requirements of their institutions (Landa et al., 2021). This also meant that lecturers had to act as constructors and actors and had to design tasks, environments, and resources to help students learn. Furthermore, they had to consider the modality, pacing, student-instructor ratio, pedagogy, online instructor role, online student role, online communication synchrony, the role of online assessments, source of feedback of their programmes, and delivery of their courses (Hodges et al., 2020). Institutions and staff faced practical and technical challenges in implementing online learning and struggled with technical support (Hodges et al., 2020), so these institutions and staff frequently retained their focus on old procedures. Hodges et al. (2020) further suggested that, although moving instruction online can enable flexibility for teaching and learning anywhere and at any time, the speed with which this move occurred during Covid-19, coupled with technical problems such as installation and login problems, proved to be daunting.

Research indicates that the use of online materials flourished immensely when teaching and learning at HEIs were limited to the online space (Strydom et al., 2020). In their investigation, Strydom et al. (2020) also found that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many lecturers were provided with an opportunity to search and explore information and materials through learning management systems. Authors have also suggested that these learning management systems, such as Moodle and Blackboard as well as websites and other related resources, had not been used optimally prior to the pandemic (Hlalele, 2012; Strydom et al., 2020). This could be attributed to the limited training of lecturers in relation to the use of information communication technologies for teaching and learning purposes (Dube, 2020) Accordingly, in this study, we believe that the resilience needed for the rapid capacity development of lecturers presented itself as a benefit to our practice and to the South African HEI landscape in general (Dube, 2020). As highlighted in the study by Dube (2020), lecturers and university administrations explored the opportunity for the development of blended learning and working remotely. This allowed staff to continue engagement outside the confines of a traditional university lecture hall.

According to Mpungose (2020), the digital disparities among staff were exposed without warning given that there is unreliable internet accessibility in many of the peri-urban and rural areas where some staff are based. Added to these problems, van Niekerk and van Gent (2020) found that a lack of adequate prior training on the requirements of online teaching and learning for lecturers was a serious problem in the initial stages. Many lecturers grappled with how to function effectively using these new technologies.

Problem Statement

In 2020, when the National State of Disaster was declared in South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 2020), the higher education landscape was faced with existing and new challenges. The academic year had not yet commenced in the envisaged face-to-face modality, and lecturers had not received any training to offer remote or online teaching (Dube, 2020). For decades, the changing learner context has required a move from traditional classrooms to a combination of physical and virtual spaces (Suorsa & Eskilsson, 2014). Yet, literature highlights a gap in the research with reference to understanding the experiences of lecturers who teach through online learning in under-resourced contexts. As online modules and programmes increased, the methods of provision required constant modification and assessment to guarantee that the programmes and modules sustained student demands. This increased consciousness of the necessity for experienced and skilled online lecturers (Gregory & Lodge, 2015). According to Roddy et al. (2017), much research attention focused on the view of online student readiness however, very little attention was given to the experiences of online lecturers.

Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) postulated that if more attention were given to the experiences of lecturers, universities would be forced to expose their faculty to training on the use of various forms of digital learning and education. Many lecturers were affected by the unavailability of laptops, computer tablets, computers, or library facilities to use in connecting to the online modality—which was a challenge (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019; Mpungose, 2020; Strydom et al., 2020). This issue could have been addressed if more literature was available on the challenges faced by lecturers. Thus, online lecturer readiness is emerging as an important concept that needs to be interrogated (Bates, 2020). Houlden and Veletsianos and Houlden (2020) suggested that because not enough research had been done pertaining to lecturer experiences of online teaching, this added to their stresses when they were struggling to balance teaching, research, and service responsibilities in addition to their work-life wellness.

Against this background, we have distilled some reflections of university lecturers who teach a humanising pedagogy-embedded programme in the FP through online learning. The reflections we offer are based on research, and on years of little to no online learning and teaching experience. Online teaching and learning have disrupted the margins between teaching and learning and lecturer experience (Fawns, 2019). Basically, lecturers have had to become inventors, creators, and teachers, utilising equipment very few have confidently learned. The objectives of this study were as follows:

- To explore lecturers' experiences of teaching a humanising pedagogy-embedded programme in the Foundation Phase at an HEI, through online learning in an under-resourced context.
- To focus on technological strategies and pedagogies used in HEIs, issues related to students' inclination and adaptation to technology, the digital divide, and barriers to online learning.

This study draws on the experiences of three lecturers at an HEI in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, during the Covid-19 pandemic, and seeks to answer the following question: "What are the experiences of lecturers who teach a humanising pedagogy-embedded programme in the Foundation Phase at a university through online learning in an under-resourced context?" After we have reflected on ourselves, we radiate out and discover the possibilities around us. In this light, lecturers critically reflect on their own practices and experiences of teaching online.

Theoretical Framework: Humanising Pedagogy

This study is located in a critical paradigm and employs humanising pedagogy principles to frame it. It draws on critical theory as it seeks to "take cognisance of the subjectivity of individuals and their experiences in a complex world where not all experiences can be explained by logic" (Foley et al., 2015, p. 113). McKernan (2013) further explained that it is crucial for us in teacher education to realise that criticality is more than considering a specific situation—it includes working collaboratively towards changing oppressive situations in order to liberate student teachers. We concur with the opinion of Apple (2004) that critical theory interrogates and considers the personal and individual curriculum of students' daily lives. It critically reflects on the oppressive structures of power that control and prejudice rationality and truth (Foucault, 1984) and disputes how subjectivity converts into a political ontology (Giroux, 2007). Foley et al. (2015) reiterated that humans construct their understanding of reality and the world they live in through the relationships and collaborations they have with other human beings.

Freire (1970) viewed humanising pedagogy as essential to lecturers' success, as well as to their academic and societal adaptability. Bartolomé noted that a humanising pedagogy encourages honest collaboration between persons, "educational reliability and scholarly settings where power distribution is facilitated among them" (1994, p. 174). Macedo and Bartolomé (2000) built on that definition, emphasising that this pedagogy honours lecturers' personal life stories and historicity.

Humanising lecturers, according to Freire (1970), avail themselves to seek mutual humanisation where dialogical engagement between lecturers needs to be encouraged. A dialogical perspective advances critical consciousness and is explained by Freire as "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (1970, p. 17). Lecturers who engage in humanising pedagogy can partake in praxis and reflection on the world with the aim of transformation.

A fundamental principle of Freire's (1970) humanising pedagogy is the concept of *conscientisation*, which speaks to the idea of rebuilding, and re-imaging together with collaborators. Diemer et al. (2017) explicated that critical consciousness is the analysis and disruption of oppressive inequities within society. Accordingly, Heberle et al. (2020) motivated engagement activities that challenge social inequities and encourage the importance of personal wellness and the building of resilience. If we say we are critical humanising pedagogues, we need to move from our comfortable, neutral, and uncritical positions on information and learning technologies. Galloway (2019) and Cowden (2019) advocated for lecturers to become mindful and cognisant of themselves as public intellectuals, and to recognise and analyse practices of power and hegemony. This reasoning has moulded present-day concepts of transformation (Luke, 2017). Boronski (2021) believed that lecturers enrich the learning environment, thus, the necessity for an educational curriculum that integrates all knowledge resources.

As we tried to make meaning of the philosophical elements of computer-aided learning, the extant methods of humanising online teaching and learning in our department seemed to be noticeably lacking with respect to humanising pedagogies in the Freirean culture (Zilka et al., 2018). And there has been a great deal of talk on the significance and usefulness of interactive media, computer-based projects for lecturers, and a growing presence in online settings. In this paper, we embrace critical theory to question frameworks that promote humanising approaches in online education. Through our narrative freewriting, we present how we have woven into our fundamental pedagogy, opportunities to humanise virtual learning environments and reconceptualise them for purposeful lecturer learning. It is important for us not only to present suggestions made in this paper as representations for duplication, but to also highlight our anxieties, difficulties, and pressures—which allowed us to grow, and stimulated new thinking processes that strengthened our commitments to critical and humanising processes.

Teaching and learning is an exchange of knowledge, thus research on lecturers has been driven by the assumption that knowledge is at the heart of their professional competence and development (Shulman, 1986). Sayed et al. (2018) suggested that, while the idea of knowledge sets helps to understand the conceptual framing of initial teacher education programmes, in the end, it is how this translates into programme design that determines their usefulness. Nonetheless, online teaching and learning imply a certain pedagogical content knowledge, and an ability to navigate online technologies (Rapanta et al., 2020) and hybrid modalities for teaching and learning (UNESCO, 2020).

Methodology

We adopted a qualitative arts-based design in line with Creswell and Creswell (2017), which allowed us to understand how we make sense of our working world and the experiences we have in it. The study was further located within the participatory visual methodologies by using the data generation method of poetic inquiry to recount our experiences of exploring a humanising pedagogy as a way of practising social justice in online learning during Covid-19 times. De Vos et al. (2011) and Notshulwana, (2020, p. 63) argued that when participatory visual methodologies are encapsulated in a qualitative approach, they allow the research process to be inductive, holistic, and process-orientated in nature, therefore, "the approach allows for a safe environment and flexibility for the participants." In this study, we were able to be vulnerable in sharing our practices of humanising pedagogy as a way of

practising social justice during online learning, through the use of a qualitative approach and participatory methods. Poetic inquiry, underpinned by the critical transformative paradigm, meant that we were able to reconstruct our thinking on what humanising pedagogy could look like in the online learning space moving beyond Covid-19.

As FP lecturers, we were attracted to the practice of arts-based research in which poetic inquiry was utilised as a methodology. The authentications of this research design are a dedication to engagement, interrogation, meaning-making, and ample and inviting understandings of people's experiences (Cahmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2018). Faulkner (2009) declared that there is no clear description of poetry, but when it is utilised as a methodology, poetry is validated by its word-based hallmarks. Faulkner (2019) further stated that poetry is an ambiguous method of writing that is expressed through alliteration, form, image, language use, line, metaphor, and so forth. One can thus comfortably say that a poem is an image, an expression, a thought, summarised into an artistic, poetic scholarly genre; poetry is a meaningful way of writing that is unique and interconnected to established research designs. Leggo (2008, p. 168) said:

> *Poetry calls attention to itself as text, as a rhetorical device and stratagem. Poetry does not invite readers to consume the text as if it were a husk that contains a pithy truth. Poetry is not a window on the world. Poetry invites us to listen. Poetry is a site for dwelling, for holding up, for stopping. Poetry prevails against hermeneutic exhaustion, hermeneutic consumption, hermeneutic closure, and hermeneutic certainty. Poetry is not hermetic. A poem is a textual event, an "act of literature," an experience of spelling and spells.*

We embraced this definition of arts-based research because, as lecturers, it connected us as researchers as well, reflecting on our own experiences.

We used a critical transformative paradigm to locate this study because we aimed to critically rethink, reflect, and foster pedagogical change or shift in our online teaching pedagogies. Scholars using this paradigm postulate that historical, socio-cultural, and political perspectives shape the multiple realities that exist (Chilisa, 2012; Mertens, 2010). For example, our understanding and thinking of humanising pedagogy as a vehicle for the attainment of a socially just online learning environment was informed by our personal experiences and contextual realities.

The study took place at Nelson Mandela University in the Eastern Cape Province, one of the three rural provinces of South Africa. The rurality of the province resulted in it being under-resourced in terms of stable network connections, access to technological devices, and electricity (Yamile, 2021). Thus, it became imperative for us as lecturers to explore our experiences of teaching a humanising pedagogy-embedded programme via online learning in a highly under-resourced context such as the Eastern Cape. In this study, we wrote poems on our experience of teaching different modules in the BEd. programme. Our experiences in teaching have been different. For example, before entering the university space, Obakeng lectured at a technical and vocational college facilitating early childhood development modules for practitioners. Currently, he is responsible for module writing, teaching, and research in the BEd. programme. Deidre was the head of the FP programme for 11 years. She led the curriculum renewal process of the BEd. FP. Her experiences as a classroom-based educator for over 17 years contributed towards her teaching the module, School-Based Learning, which is a generic module offered to all undergraduate BEd. students. Lastly, Koketso, an emerging academic previously teaching at two South African universities and assuming a role as assistant director at a national educational institution, had recently joined the faculty. He used his experiences from other institutions and the current study to write a poem on his involvement while presenting teaching methodology and practicum at fourth-year level during Covid-19.

Data Gathering Strategies

Fricker (2017) offered this definition of reflection: it occurs when an activity is ceased in order to think or rethink any part of an occurrence such as, for example, validity, confirmation, practices, or possible consequences. Reflection may be an independent activity or performed by a group of people. It was initiated by us because of the Covid-19 pandemic and having to teach online. Because we were reflecting on our own practice, we did not require ethical approval for this research. We collaboratively set these reflective questions that guided our poetic inquiry and narrative freewriting.

- What are we hearing?

- What are the challenges and opportunities we experienced?

These two questions helped us to critically reflect on our practices and experiences of teaching modules embedded in a humanising pedagogy in the online platform.

For data generation, we had a Microsoft Teams meeting to recite our poems to each other and reflect on them. We agreed to record our conversation and had it transcribed verbatim. The knowledge gained through the above participatory method allowed us to enhance and change our teaching in our respective modules. In this section, we first present the poems as Phase 1. Table 1 presents the poems we wrote, and which sparked the conversation that led to meaning making and generated rich data. The poems are followed by extracts from the freewriting we did, as Phase 2.

Phase 1

Table 1: Authors' Poems

"You Uninvited Guest" by Deidre	"An Unexpected Shift" by Obakeng	"Teaching in Uncertain Times" by Koketso
1. Who invited you in without any announcement? 2. Don't you know you were never welcomed? 3. Go away, I don't need you, my colleagues don't need you and my students especially don't need you. 4. But wait, wait, wait 5. Let me look, see and listen. 6. New opportunities—it's exciting 7. I am learning 8. We are learning 9. We are learning 10. I am learning	1. It hit us unexpectedly 2. We were unsure of what's next 3. Anxiety, disruption and new normal kicked in. 4. lose, pain and discomfort was the dominant feature. 5. One had to be strong for others and self 6. Disruption in ways of learning and teaching 7. Crafting nuanced ways of delivering content. 8. Zoom, Teams, and WhatsApp teaching become the order of the day. 9. No data, no internet, and no gadgets were the	1. When I teach I always smile, 2. Like a child in a shop, walking through the toys aisle, 3. Then came the lockdown, 4. The difficulties that came with teaching through technology made me frown, 5. my students experienced it too, so we stuck together like glue, 6. How do I use Zoom, sometimes we ran out of data, 7. Then boom, It seems, we have to use Teams, 8. The township streets we no longer have to

11. New opportunities—it's exciting	barriers we had to deal with.	aimlessly roam, because we are building an educational empire that will outlast Rome.
12. Let me look, see and listen.	10. Like Brice said: The show goes on	
13. But wait, wait, wait		9. The township streets we no longer have to aimlessly roam, because we are building an educational empire that will outlast Rome.
14. Go away, I don't need you, my colleagues don't need you and my students especially don't need you.		10. Then boom, It seems, we have to use Teams,
15. Don't you know you were never welcomed?		11. How do I use Zoom, sometimes we ran out of data,
16. Who invited you in without any announcement?		12. my students experienced it too, so we stuck together like glue,
		13. The difficulties that came with teaching through technology made me frown,
		14. Then came the lockdown,
		15. Like a child in a shop, walking through the toys aisle,
		16. When I teach I always smile

Phase 2

Elbow (1998) defined freewriting as a spontaneous approach to encourage the free flow of thought. The emphasis is on unbroken writing on any specific issue. The idea is to not stop whilst writing—no editing is allowed, just continuous writing. Elbow (1998) further declared that freewriting promotes inspired communication and the creation of thoughts in easy-going, rapid, unrestricted, and relaxed circumstances (see Table 2).

Table 2: Freewriting That Emerged From the Participants' Poems

Deidre	Obakeng	Koketsu
1. Go away, I don't need you, my colleagues don't need you and my students especially don't need you.	1. We were unsure of what's next.	1. Where teaching and learning have become less formal.
2. Who invited you in without any announcement?	2. Anxiety, disruption and new normal kicked in.	2. The difficulties that came with teaching through technology made me frown.
3. Don't you know you were never welcomed?	3. No data, no internet, and no gadgets were the barriers we had to deal with.	3. How do I use Zoom, sometimes we ran out of data, Then boom, it seems, we have to use Teams.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was utilised to analyse the data generated during the poetic inquiry, and we were guided by Tesch's steps (as mentioned by Creswell, 2013). These steps included transcribing and translating the data, and we made note of the first layer of data analysis, which meant we asked each other questions and were further involved in trying to answer those questions. In our individual spaces, we repeatedly read the poems and transcribed data from our conversations in search of common themes. We coded the data and wrote them next to relevant paragraphs of the text. For ensuring the quality and accuracy of our findings, we referred to the raw data we had generated to further check consistency in the themes and raw data. We continuously asked each other questions in areas that required clarity or where someone did not understand—this can be regarded as *member checking* in instances where the researchers are participants. The above was also done to ensure trustworthiness and maintain the integrity of the study.

Two dominant themes emerged from the data: lecturer mutual vulnerability and lecturer resilience and collaboration. As seen from the literature, many universities responded to the challenges of electronic machine learning by providing appropriate infrastructure to staff and online professional development initiatives to try and strengthen staff capacity to work online but, somehow, did not focus on lecturer mental wellness.

Theme 1: Lecturer Mutual Vulnerability

The data highlighted the heightened levels of anxiety lecturers experienced because things remained uncertain for so long. Participants mentioned experiencing feelings of insecurity, stress, and fear. Deidre mentioned that knowing that others felt equally vulnerable in the online space, gave her confidence to continue learning and trying. Obakeng stated that he occasionally felt that he was living in a bubble, and that reality was much broader than he'd previously thought. But he knew he wasn't experiencing it alone. Koketso admitted that he was comfortable with not knowing the outcomes of his choices or action, appreciating that others felt likewise: " My own uncertain, was very comforting to me. I knew others were in the same boat, scared of dropping the balls, which made me feel tougher."

Participants also confirmed that little or no guidance was given to them on how to approach the situation. This only increased their feelings of vulnerability. As mentioned by the participants, they did not have any training to utilise online platforms. Deidre stated that she had not been willing to change her practice to using online tools:

> *I am a Foundation Phase lecturer, and my students need to know how to teach. And that requires hands-on learning and teaching. We were on our laptops day and night, a 24-hour day was just too short to accommodate our students and their needs. Moving between the many balls I had to juggle left me feeling so vulnerable, so limited, so incapable. As head of department, I am supposed to be the knowledgeable other to lead my team, it felt that I needed leading more than anyone else.*

> *The poems and reflective freewriting allowed me to breathe, I wasn't in it alone—my colleagues felt as vulnerable as I did.*

Obakeng said:

> *It is okay, we are okay, we will pull through. We just need to hang in there and assist each other as best we can if we want to survive this pandemic of mass destruction whilst being online.*

Participants were able to bring their whole selves into the online learning spaces. Admitting to their students that they too felt vulnerable and less abled. "It felt like bringing my personal life into the public domain open to critique, and interrogation," said Koketso. Deidre emphasised that we witnessed our students'

> *lived realities, the conditions under which they studied, the vulnerability to technological limitations of devices and wifi access. There wasn't much we could do except ensure they had access to wifi and be available to them when they called on us.*

The online spaces confirmed that it was okay not to know, and to admit to ourselves and colleagues that we needed assistance to reach our outcomes within our respective modules. The findings revealed that vulnerability served as a pedagogical tool where we became co-learners in spaces unknown to many of us—if not all of us. Nations, communities, and individuals generally, were vulnerable because their beings were entrenched in surroundings and conditions that had enhanced their vulnerabilities during the pandemic. Delgado (2021) highlighted that vulnerability can no longer be summarised, as it typically was, as an individual issue or concern; it is an experience or understanding informed by humanising principles of reflection, consciousness, and dialogue. The participants recognised that colleagues' states are naturally delicate and that others experienced the same difficulties. Mutual vulnerability occurred because all people are integrally linked to the world, they participate in relationships with other human beings, and work together constantly within their immediate environments and the world. As participants, we concluded that we could not succeed and endure if our being and realities were not linked to the survival of others.

The concept of vulnerability relates to cohesion and mutuality—the demands, and necessities of people and communities, not just of individuals. In this viewpoint, as expressed by us, vulnerability is not an individualistic capability nor shortfall but a collective and mutual response. Delgado (2021) extended the idea of mutual vulnerability to the significance of resilience and collaboration.

Theme 2: Lecturer Resilience and Collaboration

Table 3 portrays the intensity of hopefulness amongst lecturers amid Covid-19. As indicated, lecturers had a remarkable degree of resilience amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. The data highlighted that despite the danger and encounters caused by the pandemic, lecturers persisted in being confident and expectant that things would turn out for the best. This type of perspective might be ascribed to information on successful implementation experiences as expressed by their students and colleagues.

The data also indicated that the biggest shift for lecturers was the mindset one. All three participants agreed that when they were able to make the shift, they could see their own growth and determination to succeed increase. This was supported by the continuous questioning or inquiry-based approach adopted by the participants. The trust among the three participants with our collective knowledge, skills, and methodologies pushed us to be resilient. We were mindful that we were designing courses that spoke to the needs of our diverse student population. Our poems and narratives indicated how, as participants, we moved to and from our own learning zones as we built competencies—and our resilience increased as well.

Deidre's poem in Table 1 also indicates that as a more mature lecturer, her fears were much bigger than those of Obakeng and Koketso, who are younger lecturers. She mentioned her own vulnerability in her guided questions. And, Koketso re-emphasised the new learning opportunities have been created because of our collaboration—as we were partnering with each other, so our skills and competencies improved. The data show that assuming an approach of togetherness, and acting in ways that supported each other, had marked consequences on our own resilience.

Table 3: Authors' Poems

Deidre	Obakeng	Koketsu
1. We are learning I am learning	1. Crafting nuanced ways of delivering content.	1. My students experienced it too, so we stuck together like glue.
2. Let me look, see and listen. New opportunities – it's exciting	2. Zoom, Teams, and WhatsApp teaching become the order of the day.	2. The township streets we no longer have to aimlessly roam, because we are building an educational empire that will outlast Rome.
	3. One had to be strong for others and self	3. Like a child in a shop, walking through the toys aisle, When I teach, I always smile

Obakeng highlighted that collaboration with colleagues and students "created a space for shared intellectual effort by all in the online learning space." For him, this was a way the technological landscape became a humanised space of collective learning, and it strengthened his resilience to keep on going.

This study is in conversation with the literature on humanising pedagogy and the benefits of online learning, and argues that lecturers need technological online environments where they can build resilience and collaborate with colleagues to improve the way they facilitate teaching and learning for humanisation. The culture of collaboration amongst colleagues strengthened their resilience due to the peer support received. Younger colleagues were not only a source of encouragement but also of collaborative learning. This connects to the collaboration thread throughout the study.

What are the Teachings and Learning We are Taking With Us Into the New Academic Face-to-Face Contact Sessions?

The lessons that we learned during this period are twofold. They relate to 1) our personal professional development in relation to technology-enhanced teaching and learning and 2) to mental wellness. Regarding professional development, we believe that it is important for us to remain abreast regarding new technological developments in the education landscape. As was seen during the Covid-19 pandemic, many educators including us, relied solely on the support or lack thereof provided by universities. This was a disadvantage to us because we only had beginner knowledge of how to use Zoom and Microsoft Teams, and it became very difficult when we were dealing with large numbers of students online. Lecturers need to develop creative initiatives to overcome the limitations of virtual teaching, we need to vigorously collaborate with one another at phase, faculty, and institutional levels to improve online teaching methods. Doucet et al. (2020) asserted that there are unmatched opportunities for collaboration, creative blends, and a willingness to learn from others by trying different devices as lecturers. If a university is going to adopt a blended approach, then it is important that it ensures the professional development of their staff—which is a demand for us not to be found ill equipped.

Finally, regarding mental wellness, we believe that for one to be productive as a lecturer, one must maintain mental well-being. Facing the challenges that came about due to the Covid-19 pandemic, as mentioned in our poems, made us very worried. We were in national lockdown (Levels 4 and 5) for almost five months, working from our respective spaces. The difficulty at that time was to assist lecturers in shifting from face-to-face contact sessions to online teaching. Research has revealed a significant rise in stress and burnout (Pellerone, 2021), and especially in technostress, during the pandemic It has been recognised that lecturers' occupations prior to Covid-19 demand extreme endurance, sympathy, resilience, and persistence to present relevant education during the academic year. Lecturing in HEIs is also known as an occupation of great stress and high exhaustion levels (Sokal et al., 2021). During the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, the task of lecturing online became exceptionally problematic, and the change in HEIs' environments, plus the demand to use various online devices that had never been used before, compromised lecturers' mental wellness. The participants are of the opinion that support from management was extremely limited, or absent in some cases. It is vital for HEIs to invest in holistic wellness programmes prepared to meet the demands of lecturers. But, more importantly, wellness is each person's own responsibility. Lecturers need to grow competencies for handling the blurred lines between work and their personal lives (such as the handling of emails related to their employment matters). It is important that these matters be addressed at appropriate times during the day and not follow lecturers into their sleep. Lecturers need to equip themselves with programmes on wellness offered by their institutions. Colleagues need increased reflexivity, mindfulness, and positive opinion of themselves as lecturers. Creating communities of practice helps provide networking prospects to enhance collaboration.

Conclusion: Mapping a Way Forward for Teacher Education

The Covid-19 pandemic pushed us as lecturers into a new reality of online/remote/distance learning through computer-generated classroom spaces. The transitions from traditional face-to-face classes to online learning have brought about a number of deliberations that we as FP lecturers had to reflect on, rethink, and re-envision—and come to a compromise in order to achieve mutual and meaningful collaborative learning and social spaces. It is important to acknowledge lecturer mutual vulnerability, resilience, and collaboration. We need to highlight lecturers as learners who are flexible, adjustable, and actively engaging on online platforms. So where do we begin to re-envision the purposes of higher education when the questions we are challenged with as an institution are so big, and our own vulnerabilities and insecurities feel enlarged, and we lack agency at times amid these larger forces and

barriers? Today, what we know for sure is that we are that person in the mirror; begin with yourself, begin with your classroom, begin with your institution.

Communication channels need to be open amongst lecturers for collaborative conversations to communicate experiential knowledge gained during the epidemic, and knowledge about practices develop during that period. Concerted efforts need to be made by the participants to upskill themselves, and to offer a setting that shapes professional learning. Lastly, lecturers need to develop more interest in online technologies and find more ways to integrate them into their teaching and learning. The pandemic period afforded us with both chances and trials. It brought about positive options from the participants regarding their quick move to online learning spaces. It is important that our teaching and learning experiences allow us to build collaboration and partnerships with others in the space. It facilitated a process of connectedness and support in the learning process.

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