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Accounting Teachers' Readiness for Virtual Classroom During the Covid-19 Pandemic, South Africa

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Abstract

Accounting education is crucial because it establishes the core knowledge required for education and growth in any country. During COVID-19, teachers in Accounting schools, like those in other educational institutions, were expected to adopt virtual classroom to continue their educational activities. This study aimed to demonstrate the virtual classroom readiness of Accounting school teachers in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study employed qualitative research methods in this study, and the case study research design was used to explore the reality about virtual classroom readiness of Accounting school teachers and semi-structured interviews and thematic content analysis were employed to generate data. Results show that teachers are not prepared to implement virtual classroom during the Covid-19, according to the findings, and no one is assisting them. Another result indicated that virtual classroom facilities are lacking in schools. Education officials should offer ongoing virtual classroom courses for teachers, according to the study. In this study author concludes that, in order for instructors to be prepared for virtual classroom, educational administrators must oversee its implementation. In this study the author recommends that teachers must notify people in charge of education about what needs to be done in order to provide high-quality instruction.

Keywords: Covid-19; virtual classroom; Technology Acceptance Model; teachers' readiness; online classroom

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INTRODUCTION

The availability of educational technology and e-tools learning channels in many institutions of learning has proven to be extremely beneficial in facilitating the emergency transition to online learning and ensuring educational continuity (Aljawarneh, 2020). Although technology was employed in some schools before to the COVID-19 pandemic, most schools are now compelled to use it in order to continue teaching and learning activities, resulting in a major growth in online teaching and learning (Mishra et al., 2020). The ability of virtual classroom users to adapt to a new learning environment, utilise new technologies, and engage in self-directed learning is known as e-readiness (Rosen et al., 2014). Virtual classroom is a feature of the twenty-first century, and all institutions throughout the world are seeking for new and more effective ways to deliver education and link learners and other stakeholders more extensively (Beetham & Sharpe, 2019). Similarly, Daniels (2016) stated that virtual classroom has become an important component of education delivery in the

twenty-first century. Daniels (2016) went on to say that the efficiency of virtual classroom is dependent on a solid network with specific software, a repository for controlling information delivery, and a positive social environment established by online interaction among learners. However, Mncube et al. (2019) found that teachers' use of digital tools and resources influenced their use of digital tools and devices for examining curricular content in their classrooms, indicating their preparedness to adopt virtual classroom. Similarly, Dagada and Chigona (2013) found that most teachers do not use digital tools because they do not comprehend the intricate linkages between material, pedagogy, and the technology that has to be integrated into curriculum delivery. However, Skhephe and Matashu (2021) asserts that, because Accounting school teachers are expected to continue teaching and learning in the same way that other teachers do, and because they lay the groundwork for teaching and learning, it was deemed necessary to investigate their readiness for virtual classroom teaching during this abrupt shift from face-to-face to virtual classroom.

Teachers' preparation for virtual classroom, according to Ozturk et al. (2018), aids their schools in developing comprehensive virtual classroom plans and effectively implementing technology goals. Learners must also be ready for virtual classroom, according to Ozturk et al. (2018), so that a coherent and attainable plan customized to their needs may be adopted. For example, South Africa is a developing country with its own set of issues when it comes to the use of technology in education. One of the obstacles, according to Masonta et al. (2015), is the lack of digital infrastructure, particularly in rural communities and schools. This type of infrastructure is critical for the delivery of online learning. However, according to a study by Falloon (2013), lack of technology infrastructure isn't the Accounting reason teachers don't use technology in their classrooms. Before technology may be used in the classroom, there are a few problems that must be addressed. Those things are the teacher's knowledge and experience with technology. According to Fallon, these strategies are not considered as effective by Accounting school instructors since they do not foster active learning, which is necessary in early learning courses. According to Sutterlin (2018), learners require their peers and interaction in the classroom to learn and enjoy their lessons, but with the help of virtual classroom, they may experience those things through various platforms of technology. After considering the study's stated goal, the authors of this study determined that the technology acceptance model (TAM) was the best choice for guiding their research.

TAM is used to forecast or determine why one person may choose to adopt technology while another does not (Teo, 2009). If technological systems are not used, according to Davis (1989), they will not serve their aim of improving organizations. Similarly, this research assumes that teachers' readiness for virtual classroom adoption and use is based on their acceptance of educational technology and awareness of their potential when fully employed. Davis (1989) supports this viewpoint, observing that the potential benefits of technical systems are frequently unrealized due to the intended users' unwillingness to employ them. Users are hesitant to use systems because they either do not believe they will help them improve their jobs or believe they will be difficult to use. The study's major research question is: Are Accounting school teachers prepared for virtual classroom amid the Covid-19 pandemic? The sub-research questions derived from the main question are: Are Accounting school teachers prepared to implement virtual classroom? How does the state of the classroom influence the usage of virtual classroom in Accounting schools?

METHOD

Research approach

This qualitative research sought rich data in order to assist us to fully understand the context of the study and the research problem regarding the Accounting teacher's readiness for virtual classroom during Covid-19 in South Africa. Qualitative research facilitated the investigation of teachers' readiness for virtual classroom by collecting, analysing and interpreting their comprehensive stories and the visual data to gain insights into the research problem (Nolan et al., 2013).

Participants

The participants of the study comprised qualified Accounting school's teachers in South Africa. We used pseudonyms to protect participants' identity and research sites. The size of participants was manageable and offered us an opportunity to grasp the meaning that participants give to their experiences, and to understand their behaviour (Eyisi, 2016; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Mukherji & Albon, 2015). The criteria that was used to determine research participant is called purposive and convenient.

Data Collection

The study utilised one qualitative data generation methods, specifically interviews. This also included the use of videotapes and audio-recordings to collect, store and transcribe data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The ten interviews took place in the classroom context to acquire an in-depth understanding of the situations virtual classroom readiness within the classroom. Knowledge was generated through interactions with the participating teachers (epistemology) (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Therefore, the study was successfully carried out in the presence of the participants in the classrooms to explore the Accounting school's teacher's readiness for virtual classroom during Covid-19 pandemic.

Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was utilised in this study because it facilitated the dissecting of texts and responses of the interviewed participants (Yin, 2018). This method was therefore appropriate because Accounting school teachers were asked open-ended questions during the interviews. Each of the10 teachers was interviewed about the readiness for virtual classroom and also effect of classroom in the implementation of virtual classroom. Then they were directly observed in a non-participatory teaching learners (not direct participants) observation to read in order to ensure the trustworthiness of data generated through interviews. As Yin (2018) suggested that it is essential to analyse the case study data immediately after the data generation process is commenced, therefore each of the participants' interviews was analysed separately. We first transcribed the recordings of the interviews and thereafter interpreted the data to be well understood. The Codes and Coding techniques were used in order to link data back to the research questions and to identify common themes as thematic analysis method was used in this study. Since data analysis is a continuous process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013), we continuously analysed data even after the last day of the data collection in the schools. Data presentation involved using extracts taken from the coded data to substantiate research findings. Thereafter, the presentation and interpretation of data were done case by case.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Accounting school teachers' readiness for virtual classroom

The study found that Accounting school instructors are unprepared for virtual classroom, which has hampered their ability to comprehend how it is being used for teaching and learning. This finding is supported by the teacher who reveal that, "*I am not prepared to teach any technology. However, I'd like to understand more about how virtual classroom is employed in the classroom. I also feel that if we want to ensure that virtual classroom is a success, it should begin in the lower grades so that learners and teachers are familiar with how to use technology in their studies*". The findings back up Dagada and Chigona's (2013) claim that most teachers don't use digital tools because they don't comprehend the intricate links that exist between material, pedagogy, and the technology that needs to be integrated into curriculum delivery. However, the findings contradict Ozturk et al. (2018), who claim that instructors' preparation for virtual classroom aids their schools in fully designing virtual classroom strategies and efficiently implementing their technology goals. But Kaur and Abas claim is in agreement with the finding from the teacher whopoint out that, "*All teachers should be prepared for virtual classroom because the world is changing. For example, no one knew we'd be having Covid-19, and if we were acclimated to online teaching, it would be simple to continue our work. Apart from that when the teachers are prepared for online teaching they can also design their own strategy to utilise technology in their studies*". The above finding confirm the that when teachers lack the necessary knowledge to apply virtual classroom effectively, the virtual classroom goals will not be met.

Apart from that this finding is connecting well with the finding from Redempta and Elizabeth (2012), "understanding and implementing virtual classroom is a powerful enabling tool for educational change and reform," and "much of the productivity increases in developed world economies over the past decate may be linked to the impact of technology to a large extent." They go on to say that as teachers and learners grow more tech-savvy, they are better able to provide important information to the classroom and provide solutions that are tailored to the individual needs of each learning group. Their finding is also supported by the teacher who opine that, "*I can also state that teachers and learners are ready because they are using their smart phones and laptops provided by their parents(Learners) education department(teachers) but the unfortunate thing is that all of us we are using these devices for uneducated things*". This finding is in line with the ideas of Davis (1989) who have worry that, if the goal to use technological systems is not accomplished, organizations will not enjoy the benefits of those systems. Furthermore, when teachers are not prepared to teach technology, their learners miss out on the potential benefits of technical systems, which are frequently unrealized due to the intended users' unwillingness to use them.

Effect of classrooms condition on virtual classroom

Even though technology is supposed to be used in the classroom for teaching and learning, the study found that classrooms do not promote any technological learning. This finding is supported by the comments from the teacher who said that, "*Classroom settings have an impact on not only the use of virtual classroom, but also the entire teaching and learning process. For example, when the classroom promotes learning rather than just technology learning, learners learn more easily. Now, if we compare our own classrooms to what a virtual classroom requires, we can see that we are still a long way from our goals*". This is in contrast to Beetham and Sharpe's (2019) conclusions that virtual classroom

is a feature of the twenty-first century, and that all institutions throughout the world are seeking for novel and more effective ways to deliver education and to link learners and other stakeholders more extensively. Despite the fact that virtual classroom is the features of the twenty-first century as mentioned by Beetham and Sharpe (2019) but the findings in the study shows that, in the context where the study was conducted online learning cannot take place because classrooms are not well-maintained. This finding is confirmed by the teacher who reveal that, "*If education officials wish to introduce virtual classroom, they must first improve the classroom settings, as they currently do not meet the requirements for virtual classroom in South Africa. Our classrooms are not conducive to any type of learning, and it may get even worse if we try to use technology to* study'' this assertion is in agreement with the ideas of Daniels (2016), who stated that virtual classroom depend on a solid network with specific software, a repository for controlling content delivery, and a good social environment established by online interaction among learners.

The findings corroborate Skhephe and Caga's (2019) claim that COVID-19 has altered how instruction is provided, and as a result, the influence of COVID-19 has become critical. With the hope of developing scientifically driven solutions to this problem, online teaching is an uncompromising choice. Skhephe and Caga also discovered that many African schools have deteriorating infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and low educational outcomes. The above finding is supported by the teacher who confirm that, "*No successful virtual classroom can take place in our current classroom conditions. But I feel terrible for our learners because they want to use these new technologies in their studies, and you will occasionally see a student in the classroom with his or her own smart phone*''. The findings support Amnesty International's report (2021), which claims that classroom circumstances in South Africa do not comply with the country's constitution's right to excellent education. Classrooms must also demonstrate that learners and instructors are safe to learn and have the infrastructure and resources to do so, according to Amnesy International, but the findings of their study show that this is not the case for many learners in South Africa. The findings are similar to those of Skhephe and Caga (2019), who state that since the start of the democratic government, the South African government has made significant progress in ensuring learners' right to education but there are still serious complaints on how education is being provided in the country.

CONCLUSION

The basic purpose of any nation-building project is to provide high-quality education. virtual classroom served as a vital instrument during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, allowing both learners and teachers in their schools to develop their technology abilities in order to meet the needs of the twenty-first century. The implementation of virtual classroom, on the other hand, must be done with considerable care. During the Covid-19 outbreak in South Africa, this study looked into instructors' readiness for virtual classroom. During the Covid-19 epidemic, this study focuses on teacher preparation for virtual classroom. The researcher concludes in this study that in order for instructors to be prepared for virtual classroom, educational administrators must oversee its implementation. Furthermore, the researcher finds that in order to enable virtual classroom, virtual classroom policies must be developed and implemented throughout all schools, as well as infrastructure.

RECOMMENDATION

Prior to the Covid-19 epidemic, teaching and learning took done in the classroom with physical touch. Education officials should offer continual virtual classroom sessions for instructors, according to the study. Furthermore, because virtual classroom is a component of the twenty-first century, the researcher advises that classrooms be modified to promote it. The researcher also suggests that teaching should include relevant information and methodologies, and that virtual classroom, which is a feature of the twenty-first century, should be made mandatory. Teachers must notify people in charge of education about what needs to be done in order to provide high-quality instruction. The researcher also suggests that teachers and learners be given the opportunity to express their concerns about the entire school setting, including the classroom. The research recommend that further research is still need on the teacher's readiness for virtual classroom even in other subject, since the researcher has only focus on Accounting, which is a limitation of the study. Finally, before teachers can join their classrooms, they must be properly exposed to all of the processes involved in order to grasp these components.

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DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The author/s declare no conflict of interest.

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