

Examining the Influence of Covid-19 Pandemic on Mentoring Novice Academics in Online Distance Education and Learning (ODEL)

SALTIEL KHOLOLO COLLEN MATABOGE

Department of Educational Leadership and Management,
College of Education, University of South Africa, South Africa
Ematabsk@unisa.ac.za, ORCID:0000-0001-7805-9123

Abstract

The **purpose** of the article seeks to examine the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic on mentoring novice academics involved in Open and Distance Learning (ODEL). The **main research question** guiding this qualitative inquiry is: "How has the Covid-19 pandemic influenced the mentoring experiences of novice academics in the realm of Open and Distance Learning?" The thesis of this article is that the pandemic posed unprecedented challenges which affected the mentoring relationships of novice academics within the context of ODEL. The qualitative data collection **methods** were utilized to capture the nuanced aspects of the mentoring process during the pandemic. **Literature review** served as the primary means of data collection, drawing insights from existing scholarly works to inform the understanding of the mentoring dynamics in the ODEL environment. The study adopted an interpretive paradigm, relying on the interpretation of findings from other scholars' research as well as extracting meaningful insights from the experiences shared in the literature. **The analysis** was also rooted in the interpretative lens or paradigm. Findings suggest that the unprecedented challenges caused by the pandemic had devastating long term implications on mentoring relationships in the broader discourse within the everchanging landscape of ODEL. Some of the challenges include the following, novice academics were left with no choice but to migrate to online or electronic platforms without the requisite knowledge, skills, literacy and relevant training as they grappled with their daily research activities, virtual platforms are dependent entirely on the access or availability of internet which was not the case. factors like lack of internet connectivity, absence of electricity, intermittent load shedding and limited access to essential infrastructure

Keywords: Covid-19 Pandemic, Novice Academics, Mentoring, Research Outputs, Resilience

Introduction

In this paper, novice academics will mean lecturers and senior lecturers who are employed in the Open and Distance Learning institutions with a minimum of one to six years' experience. The new millennium demands a quantum leap to the higher educational landscape that is underpinned and characterized by considerable evolution (Aithal & Aithal, 2023). Amongst the essential imperatives of these changes has been the specific focus on educational excellence which hinges on quality scholarly research. Therefore, universities globally are expected to be engines of growth that focuses on research that will "pay off" economically to mitigate emerging practical problems within different societies (Aubrey & Boling 2024). These massive changes are not occurring in isolation but are part of an increasingly pervasive framework of neoliberalism in which progress is seen to derive from academics competing in the number of scholarly research outputs. In the same vein, Ngoc & Tien (2023) reiterate that the most important imperative regarding university mission is not only to transfer knowledge to the society but that the academics should also create new knowledge through scientific research and publications. Thus, novice academics will not be excluded in this particular requirement because they are expected to carry out this mandatory obligation without any excuses or explanations whatsoever.

Hugo & Huan (2023) found that the contributory factors to the influential notion 'publish or perish' in the journey of novice academics is a determination and limitation towards the success of an individual career path and expectations. It clearly stands to reason that without proper advice, guidance and support, novice academics may be overwhelmed with self-flagellation which is suicidal and regressive. Spina et al., (2022) found that the 'publish or perish' motto, is underpinned by the spirit of competition and highlighting the use of system of career measurement which determines success has greatly affected universities and became an overriding work culture or atmosphere. Gimenez et al., (2023) have pointed out to the growing pressure for "productivity and research

output” that universities are exerting on novice academics where research productivity have turned to be intensified with the overemphasis on getting to a “preservation of market productivity” something many universities seem to have adopted and in favour of. Similarly, Du & Lapsley (2019) concur with Gimenez et al., (2023) by affirming that this neoliberal political perspective presents competition as inherently beneficial factor to the market economy and should be regarded as the natural order which encourages market productivity and economic solutions.

Over and above the alluded imperatives, systems within universities globally were heavily influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic (Mkrtchyan & Gurin 2022). Novice academics were left basically alone for a long time with the challenges of adapting to practice their job effectively. Mohamed et al., (2022) found that during this disastrous period, it was ideally imperative for novice academics to be empowered, properly advised, guided and very well supported so that they thrive and succeed in this competitive professional field. Unfortunately, many of the novice academics indicated they had not received appropriate support and they were exposed to the unacquainted adage “publish or perish” as a drive for their professional academic survival within the ODEL landscape, this without assistance, guidance, and support towards attaining success in personal growth and development (Spina et al., 2022; Mullen, 2021). On the contrary, Ersin & Atay (2021) indicated that the central expectations for the novice academics was to be accorded adequate time and attention including regular effective guidance in a more planned manner. However, the pandemic compelled many countries to implement a plethora of measures to curb its spread and the devastating effects such as social distancing and lockdown which also adversely affected daily life activities in particular for the novice academics. Alhumaid et al., (2020) advised that this unprecedented situation left many novice academics with no option but to adopt an increased utilization and their reliance on virtual platforms such as Microsoft teams and zoom.

Lee & Gargroetzi (2023) found that the use of various electronic platforms may have made communication to be extremely difficult, leading to a significant probability of misunderstanding within any virtual environment and novice academics suffered this as a consequence. Similarly, Ochieng & Waithanji Ngware (2023) reiterated that inequities in access to educational resources also exacerbated by factors like lack of internet connectivity, absence of electricity, intermittent load shedding and limited access to essential infrastructure such as libraries impeded effective communication between novice academics, their peers as well as their mentors. Thus, novice academics are forever grappling with the consequences of the pandemic because they are facing external shocks that induce nightmares, mystification, anxiety, helplessness, self-flagellation and become overly obsessed with publication challenges. Adedoyin & Soykan (2023) advised that the Covid-19 pandemic initiated digital transformation crisis within the modes of virtual platforms used by novice academics which caused them to be susceptible to external dangers and hindrances like abrupt changes, unusual paces, a sudden technophobia including aggravated disruptive processes they experienced.

The **main research question** guiding this qualitative inquiry is: "How has the Covid-19 pandemic influenced the mentoring experiences of novice academics in the realm of Open and Distance Learning?"

The research objectives pertinent to this study “the Influence of Covid-19 Pandemic on Mentoring Novice Academics in (ODEL)” are:

- To evaluate the efficacy of virtual mentoring platforms and strategies in aiding novice academics during the Covid-19 pandemic-induced shift to (ODEL).
- To examine the challenges novice academics encounter in adjusting to remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic and explore effective mentorship interventions to alleviate these challenges in (ODEL).

Theoretical framework

Activity Theory (AT) is a theoretical framework that originated in the field of psychology and has gained prominence in various disciplines and education is no exception in this instance with regard to human–computer interaction (Sukirman and Kabilan, 2023). It provides a focal lens to analyse and understand human actions within a social context. According to Activity Theory, human activities are not isolated events but are influenced by, and also influence, the social, cultural, and historical factors in which they occur. This theoretical perspective emphasizes that humans are active agents who engage in purposeful activities to achieve specific goals. Activities are seen as complex systems comprising multiple interconnected elements, including the subject (the individual or group engaged in the activity), the object (the goal or purpose of the activity), the tools or artifacts used, the rules and norms governing the activity, the community or social setting in which the activity takes place, and the division of labour among participants. Activity theory attempted to examine human–digital platforms interactions based on the conception that a specific Activity (research outputs) could exert an influence on thinking, achievable goals, reasons for doing, ways of doing, and applying various research methodologies. In this way, novice academics could improve the effectiveness and stimulate their confidence, commitment that can assist in

overcoming their career shortcomings with enthusiasm. However, the interplay between detachment, stress, anxiety and communication, motivation is a complex and dynamic process that can significantly impact the effectiveness of the novice academics research outputs. On the other hand, anxiety can hinder effective communication and dampen motivation, ultimately impacting on the advice, guidance and support needed by the novice academics to excel in their field of research outputs and publications.

Method

This is a qualitative study which comprised of literature review as a research method. A systematic literature review was conducted drawing evidence based on books and articles published in recent year sources. To explore our knowledge and understanding about the influence of Covid-19 Pandemic on Mentoring Novice Academics in Online Distance Education and Learning (ODEL). Minerbo & Briton (2022) elucidate that integrative literature review is a form of research that reviews, critiques, and synthesises representative literature on a topic in an integrated way such that new perspectives on the topic are generated. An integrative literature review is a special kind of systematic literature review that permits the combination and synthesis of findings. In the analysis of the reviewed books and articles in understanding the topic, the interpretivist paradigm was used within a local context with its limitations that have deep social and cultural foundations (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2023). The reflections are based on the researcher's subjective perspectives about the topic.

Findings

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly impacted mentoring dynamics within online distance education, particularly for novice academics. Junn et al. (2023) assert that due to regulations mandating social isolation and remote work, there is a notable rise in the utilization of asynchronous communication methods and virtual mentorship platforms. Novice academics often encounter extreme difficulties while trying to utilize online learning platforms without direct guidance from mentors. However, innovative solutions such as virtual office hours and collaborative online spaces, have emerged to bridge this gap by encouraging mentorship and providing personalised support (Turner et al., 2023).

Likewise, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of mentorship in addressing the unique needs of novice academics within the online learning contexts. Undoubtedly, Rampersad (2024) believes that mentors play a crucial role in providing guidance, feedback, and emotional support, which are pivotal for the professional development and well-being of novice academics. Therefore, a comprehensive grasp of knowledge, skills, and expertise pertaining to the evolving dynamics of mentoring in online distance education is essential for institutions to adeptly adjust their support mechanisms. Lin Goodwin et al., (2023) maintain that this adaptation is crucial in securing the success of novice academics amidst the multifaceted challenges presented by the pandemic and its enduring effects.

Discussion- Conclusions

E-platforms challenges during Covid-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the total shutdown of many physical activities worldwide, including the expected research outputs from novice academics as their primary activities as stipulated in their individual KPAs. Additionally, Heng & Sol (2021) found that this hostile situation left novice academics in educational institutions with no choice but to migrate to online or electronic platforms as they grappled with their daily research activities. Adedoyin & Soykan (2023) reiterated that the online or electronic platform utilization is not a novel phenomenon because this sudden transformation into online platforms has posed substantial challenges for novice academics within educational institutions when they discharge their research obligatory activities globally particularly in resource-scarce environments. However, Alieto et al., (2024) argue that by their very nature, virtual platforms are dependent entirely on technological devices and the access or availability of internet, so it is undeniable that technology is the most pressing challenge to novice academics online if they are not digitally competent due to inexperience or insufficient training. In the same vein, (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2023; Dhawan (2020) concur that some typical technological issues include the lack of knowledge of how to use applications, unstable/slow internet connection, outdated communication devices, and incompatible browsers which ultimately result in despondency, deeper levels of mystification and self-flagellation as they think about the rhetoric adage "publish or perish".

Bao (2020) found that access to virtual platforms should be broadly conceptualized by as comprising the interrelated notions of availability, accessibility, acceptability, affordability and adaptability. Therefore, access must be defined by the removal of administrative and financial barriers particularly obstacles caused by exorbitant prices, irregular network schedules, distance and space, unavailability of fundamental infrastructure also need to be addressed to ensure smooth access to communication. In the same vein, Jacinto and Alieto (2020) suggest that

e-platforms should be dependent on the novice academic's willingness plus ability to integrate technology effectively into their research activities and practices. However, the literature on technology integration highlights deeply rooted barriers and the lack of presence of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations and influences on the part of the novice academics. Notably, (Bao, 2020; Jacinto and Alieto, 2020) highlight that extrinsic barriers include access to reliable resources, internet connections, and an infrastructure that can support wide-scale technological integration on wide research practice and usage by the novice academics.

On the other hand, intrinsic barriers mainly revolve around beliefs, confidence and attitudes towards technological integration of their research activities and practices. In essence, novice academics exposure to and their insufficient level of technological competence or literacy also impacts on their research outputs and increasingly aggravate on the "publish or perish" adage. On the contrary, Dhawan (2020) advise that novice academics' confidence in using technology and their perceived values of technology integration appear to have an important place in technology integration for their increased research outputs and leading towards attaining success in publications. Thus, positive attitudes towards technological integrations are prerequisites into various research platforms and activity practices. In addition, (Beaunoyer et al., 2020; Zielińska et al., 2024). affirm that challenges regarding technology do not stem only from technical operations and skills but also from "lack of self-discipline or commitment from novice academics. Therefore, (Kummitha et al., 2021; Calleros et al., 2024) suggest that the institutions must arrange and provide maximum access to technological devices, and the internet to narrow the digital divide in this academic environment.

These scholars (Cukur, 2023; Hazarika & Dagar, 2024) accentuate that as technological developments, innovations and inventions keep snowballing, so are the areas where we use and benefit from technology including their associated challenges. The term "snowballing" refers to a rapid growth and accumulation which implies a situation where something starts small and through a self-reinforcing or cumulative process grows larger and becomes more significant over time. Similarly, Kuru Gonen (2019) found that the integration of technology is a means to improve human life and provide easy access to novice academics to research practices they usually could not attain, however this does not occur without constraints and challenges. Therefore, this integration would not only help the novice academics improve their proficiency, motivate them to be committed and to address their needs and interests but also prepare them for the technology-rich world that is always forever changing (Khan et al., 2021; Aparicio et al., 2024). Hence, the role of information and e-platforms or communication technology in facilitating novice academics to conduct thorough research practices is inherently crucial and significant (Yang et al., 2023; Cain et al., 2024). It is notable under these difficult circumstances and challenges as experienced by the novice academics that their survival was dependent on their own commitment, skills and knowledge including their technological literacy competencies (Orakova et al., 2024). Mentorship also plays a crucial role that can never be substituted in the development and growth of novice academics.

Challenges faced by Mentor -Mentee during the Covid-19 pandemic

Novice academics have traditionally been viewed as confident and self reliant individuals however, many of them struggle with asking for advice, assistance and support at the early stages of starting their careers. According to Haidusek-Niazy, Huyler et al., (2023) mentoring is a dyadic relationship in which an experienced employee (mentor) encourages, advises, guides and supports a novice employee (mentee) towards personal professional development and growth in their career path. Throughout this paper, mentee will be used interchangeably with protégé. Notably, mentorship is a phenomenal concept that can be found across a myriad of disciplines and contexts, including within communities of practice which comprises of groups that share a common identity or interest and support each other through a learning process of collaboration, knowledge sharing, and guiding activities (Giamellaron & Siegel, 2023). This intricate process is aimed at contributing towards the professional development and growth of the novice academic in this instance (Güler et al., 2023). In addition, mentoring is associated with the positive outcomes including moral support and academic career path guidance.

The Covid-19 pandemic presented unique challenges to mentor-mentee interactions in Online Distance Education and Learning (ODEL). These scholars (Lasater et al., 2021; Wright et al., 2024) found that the transitional shift to remote learning transformed the nature of traditional mentoring, making it nearly impossible for mentors to provide the same level of individual support and guidance to their novice academics. The lack of face-to-face interactions resulted in the impediment of the natural flow of communication and limited the mentor's ability to measure the mentee's well-being and understanding of the allocated task to perform in the field of research. Additionally, (Fisk et al., 2023; Drysdale & Goode, 2024) cautioned that the digital divide and varying access to technology among mentees will create disparities in participation and engagement which affects the mentor's capacity to ensure an inclusive and equitable conducive environment for the protege to yield the required research output as expected.

In the same vein, Patel et al., (2023) argued that the mentees' emotional well-being were impacted by the pandemic-induced mental and emotional stresses which required mentors to change and adapt towards suitable support and guidance as a need arose and to apply various approaches. Hammoudi Halat et al., (2023) concur that the isolation which resulted from the lockdowns, as well as the probable lack of mentor-mentee interactions could have possibly exacerbated mentees' emotions of detachment and anxiety. Therefore, Andersen & Wellen (2023) found that the mentors were faced with the challenge of fostering a sense of community and addressing mentees' emotional needs through virtual means which could not be a realistic resolution within this context. Thus, (Asogwa, 2023; Mooney et al., 2024) concur with the notion that balancing the academic guidance with the empathetic mentorship became crucial in navigating the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic in the realm of Online Distance Education and Learning (ODEL) whereby novice academics are expected to flourish in their publications.

According to (Balki et al., 2023; Ko, 2024) the pandemic exacerbated the pre-existing digital divide concerns which affected both mentors and mentees adversely. Notably, access to technology and reliable internet connections varied and resulted creating differences in the communication of tasks which and impeded effective mentoring to assist, guide and support needed by the novice academics (Aithal & Aithal, 2023) suggested that mentors needed to be mindful of these technological challenges and ensure that each and every mentee had an opportunity to participate in online platforms and obtain important advice, guidance, support based on educational research materials they required for their articles and success in publications. Finally, it is recognisable that some of the barriers to novice academics connecting with mentors may be attributable to them feeling overwhelmed by the digital platform and not expecting to make a successful connection. Thus, Peter & Gupta (2024) accentuate that the issue of "platform literacy" or learning to navigate the platform poses an intricate digital system that requires deeper level of knowledge including regular intensive training with skill.

Mitigating the challenges

Bizami et al., (2023) advise that mentors could use prior technological literacy sessions to improve effective communication and connection within an Online Distance Education and Learning (ODEL) environment. In addition, regular virtual meetings employing video conferencing tools can replicate face-to-face interactions which may foster an individualized mentorship experience to provide the novice academic with the needed confidence and commitment towards their success in career path. In a similar vein, Junn et al., (2023) reiterate that it remains important for mentors to establish clear communication channels to encourage mentees to sought for advice, guidance or support when they require assistance. It is also important to ensure that mentors plan and schedule implementation of training sessions on digital tools for the novice academics on regular intervals.

It remains crucial for mentors to acknowledge the emotional impact of the pandemic on the novice academics and thereby integrate strategies for supporting their mentees' well-being. Cao & Yu (2023) found that this process involves the incorporation of mental health check-ins during virtual meetings, establishing virtual forums for effective interaction and providing requisite resources for stress and anxiety management towards adages such as "publish or perish" that could destroy novice academics through self-flagellation in their career path. As such, Russo (2023) suggests that mentorship programs should be conducted through orientation sessions to delineate expectations and goals for remote environments with an emphasis on adaptability and resilience. Thus, Niemczyk (2024) postulates that there is a need for collaboration within institutions to allow mentors to identify and rectify technology disparities among novice academics to enhance a philosophical principle underpinned by universal access to essential tools and resources. Clearly, the integration of technological solutions with a focus on emotional well-being of novice academics within the e-platform environment will enhance and facilitates the thriving mentor-mentee relationships in ODEL (Banerjee et al., 2024).

Similarly, Maiya & Aithal (2023) accentuate that institutional feedback mechanisms which enable mentees to contribute insights on the efficacy of online platforms relating to completed research tasks remains an issue of great importance. Thus, mentors are required to consistently evaluate and provide feedback on the academic research progress of mentees in order to systematically monitor the attainment of valedictorian status in their respective fields of study. In addition, Mavuru et al., (2024) cautioned that mentors ought to identify challenges promptly and offer tailored support to address specific academic research needs to the novice academics. Lee & Gargroetzi (2023) suggest that this integrated approach ensures a dynamic and responsive mentorship framework in the context of digital platform support and guidance for novice academics seeking growth and development in ODEL contexts.

Benefits of mentorship context

These scholars (Lall et al., 2023; Holmes, 2024) found that digital platforms mentoring relationships are a conduit through which individuals gain tangible and intangible resources. In their study, Arueyingho et al., (2023) found that the digital mentorship offer several benefits to novice academics including increasing their propensity to pick academic career paths that improves scientific research outputs with required academic knowledge and skills. Digital platforms mentoring are to a greater extent capable to reducing fear of failure, self-flagellation of academic adages such as “publish or perish” by increasing self-confidence, increasing opportunity creation or recognition and reinforcement of career success within the research publication field of expertise.

The advantages of mentoring individuals through digital platforms in instructional achievement, professional aspirations, and personal improvement are extensively acknowledged for the novice academics (Man & Manaf, 2023). Hence, several elements are vital for valuable mentoring connections e.g. the convenience and recurrence of interaction and communication. Technological assistance and, specifically, types of technology-mediated, which include e-mail, social media, chat groups, and virtual meetings, provide a massive capacity for empowering the mentoring approach to the novice academics (Edwards et al., 2021; Li et al., 2024). However, more understanding must be provided how technology can be applied in the mentoring to develop novice academics into experts in producing scholarly and research-related materials and assist them to “flourish and publish” good quality research article publications.

Neoliberalism and Managerialism explained.

The rapidly evolving landscape of global higher education and universities has witnessed profound paradigm shifts, with the ever-increasing influence of neoliberalism at its core. Clearly, Neoliberal ideologies are underpinned by a prioritization of free market capitalism -driven principles such as: deregulation and intensified competition, competitive generation of returns have permeated the myriad of spheres, with educational landscape being no exception in this regard (Ahmed & Rasha, 2023). Thus, this paradigm, which champions market-oriented strategies, has ushered in profound transformations in university governance, funding mechanisms and crucially their overarching organizational identities (Taberner, 2018). On the other hand, Universities on a global landscape with their rich tapestry of socio-cultural nuances and political intricacies, offer a compelling context to scrutinize the reverberations of neoliberalism within the ODEL context in higher education. Similarly, (Ahmed & Rasha, 2023) reiterate that all universities ardently pursue global recognition and competitive edge whereby they find themselves ensnared in the complex web of challenges and opportunities spun by neoliberal tenets. This rapidly evolving landscape poses unimaginable challenges alike to novice academics in multifaceted ways. The adage of “publish or perish” relates directly to the market driven principles where an intensified competition is premised.

Managerialism is prevalent in sectors like public administration and education which is closely intertwined with neoliberalism. It prioritizes efficiency, performance measurement, and hierarchical structures. Similarly, through its alignment with neoliberal principles, managerialism asserts that effective management is the solution to various issues. In this context, optimal novice academics performance is seen as an outcome of improved management practices (Shepherd, 2017). However, Deem (1998) regards managerialism as the imposition of managerial techniques or control technologies which serves the marketization of public sector services and involves monitoring efficiency and effectiveness through outcome measurement or research outputs and individual staff performance assessment on regular intervals. Notably, these imperatives pose equal challenges on a continuum as during and post the pandemic because novice academics are expected to report on their research outputs to use for promotional purposes. It brings apprehension and feels like a nightmare when they have to report a nil output in their research publications.

Curriculum transformation

Curriculum transformation amidst the Covid-19 pandemic necessitates adapting mentoring approaches for novice academics in online distance education and learning (ODEL). This entails integrating digital pedagogies, fostering technological proficiency, and emphasizing flexible instructional strategies. Additionally, curricular revisions should prioritize resilience-building skills, digital literacy, and innovative teaching methodologies tailored to virtual environments. The pandemic underscores the importance of addressing socio-emotional support mechanisms within the curriculum, ensuring holistic mentorship for novice academics navigating ODEL challenges. Furthermore, there's a need to incorporate real-world applications and experiential learning opportunities into the curriculum to enhance engagement and relevance in remote settings. By aligning curriculum transformation efforts with the evolving demands of ODEL, institutions can effectively support novice academics in adapting to the new educational landscape shaped by the pandemic.

Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic has intensely impacted mentoring practices for novice academics in the realm of Online Distance Education and Learning (ODEL). The abrupt shift to virtual platforms environments has necessitated innovative approaches to mentoring, leveraging technology to bridge the gap between mentors and mentees. While the challenges posed by the pandemic have been significant, they have also spurred adaptation and resilience within mentoring frameworks (Sato et al, 2023). The virtual platform landscape has provided opportunities for flexible, tailored support and has highlighted the importance of digital literacy in academic mentorship. Moving forward, ongoing reflection, technological integration, and a commitment to addressing the evolving needs of novice academics will be essential for fostering a supportive and effective mentoring environment in the ever-changing landscape of online educational terrain (Sprutem & Underdown, 2024).

Recommendations

Given the profound impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on mentoring novice academics in Online Distance Education and Learning (ODEL), a set of recommendations is proposed. Institutions are advised to invest significantly in professional development opportunities for mentors, fostering the enhancement of their digital mentoring skills to align with the evolving virtual platform landscapes. Virtual platforms should be utilized purposefully to cultivate a sense of community and connection among novice academics, thus alleviating potential isolation associated with remote environments. The establishment of clear communication channels and guidelines for virtual mentorship is deemed crucial for effectively navigating challenges related to the digital divide. Essential to successful mentorship in ODEL is the emphasis on flexibility in mentoring approaches, allowing for the accommodation of diverse research tasks, styles and time zones. Finally, a continuous process of assessment and adjustment of mentoring strategies that are informed by feedback and emerging needs is advocated to ensure the sustained effectiveness of mentorship programs in the dynamic context of virtual platforms within the greater educational landscape.

References

- Adedoyin, O. B., & Soykan, E. (2023). Covid-19 pandemic and online learning: the challenges and opportunities. *Interactive learning environments*, 31(2), 863-875. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2020.1813180>.
- Aithal, P. S., & Aithal, S. (2023). How to Empower Educators through Digital Pedagogies and Faculty Development Strategies. *International Journal of Applied Engineering and Management Letters (IJAEML)*, 7(4), 139-183. <https://doi.org/10.47992/IJAEML.2581.7000.0198>.
- Ahmed A. A., & Rasha A. A., (2023) Fragmentation of organizational identity in Saudi Universities: the impact of neoliberalism, *Studies in Higher Education*, DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2023.2299326.
- Alieto, E., Abequibel-Encarnacion, B., Estigoy, E., Balasa, K., Eijansantos, A., & Torres-Toukoudidis, A. (2024). Teaching inside a digital classroom: A quantitative analysis of attitude, technological competence and access among teachers across subject disciplines. *Heliyon*, 10(2). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e24282>.
- Aparicio, O. M., Ostos, O. L., & García, C. A. (2024). Convergence between emerging technologies and active methodologies in the university. *JOTSE*, 14(1), 31-44.
- Arueyingho, O., Chitchyan, R., & Bird, C. (2023). Career progression and skills in Smart Local Energy Systems. *Applied Energy*, 349, 121596. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apenergy.2023.121596>.
- Asogwa, O. R., Seals, C. D., Tripp, L. O., & Nix, K. N. (2023). Mathematics Enrichment through Accelerated Learning to Mitigate Learning Loss due to COVID-19 Pandemic and Distance Learning.
- Ihumaid, K., Ali, S., Waheed, A., Zahid, E., & Habes, M. (2020). COVID-19 & eLearning: Perceptions & attitudes of teachers towards E-learning acceptance in the developing countries. *Multicultural Education*, 6(2), 100-115. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4060121>.
- Andersen, T. S., & Wellen, H. (2023). Being a mentor in the digital era: An exploratory study of the benefits undergraduate student mentors derived from providing virtual mentoring to youth. *Journal of Community Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.23051>.
- Aubrey, A., & Boling, K. S. (2024). Black, Brown, and Thriving: Redefining Economic Podcasting. In *The Routledge Companion to Business Journalism* (pp. 429-439). Routledge.
- Balki, E., Holland, C., & Hayes, N. (2023). Use and acceptance of digital communication technology by older adults for social connectedness during the COVID-19 pandemic: mixed methods study. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 25, e41535.
- Banerjee, S., Agarwal, A., Ghosh, P., & Bar, A. K. (2024). Boosting Workplace Well-Being: A Novel Approach with a Mental Health Chatbot for Employee Engagement and Satisfaction. *American Journal of Artificial Intelligence*, 8(1), 5-12. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajcst.20240701.11>.

Bizami, N. A., Tasir, Z., & Kew, S. N. (2023). Innovative pedagogical principles and technological tools capabilities for immersive blended learning: a systematic literature review. *Education and Information Technologies*, 28(2), 1373-1425.

Dhawan, S. (2020). Online learning: A panacea in the time of COVID-19 crisis. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 49(1), 5-22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047239520934018>.

Calleros, C. B. G., García, J. G., & Calleros, J. M. G. (2024). Addressing the Digital Divide with Educational Systems in Mexico: Challenges and Opportunities. From Digital Divide to Digital Inclusion: Challenges, Perspectives and Trends in the Development of Digital Competences, 347-375. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-7645-4_16.

Cain, M., Fanshawe, M., & Goodwin, P. (2024). Shining a light on disparities to access. Specialist teachers' perceptions on the impacts of COVID-19 restrictions on learning for students with blindness and low vision in Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2024.2303106>.

Cao, W., & Yu, Z. (2023). Exploring learning outcomes, communication, anxiety, and motivation in learning communities: a systematic review. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10(1), 1-13.

Cruz, D. A. B., Campomanes, E. S. A., Belleno, E. E. L., & Alipio, M. M. (2024). Academic Stress Measurement and Management of Radiologic Technology Students. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 50(4), 38-53. <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajess/2024/v50i41309>.

Cukur, H. S. (2023). Technology Integration Beliefs and Practices of Turkish Novice EFL Teachers After Online Practicum. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 24(3), 293-310. <https://doi.org/10.17718/tojde.1138742>.

Deem, R. (1998). 'New managerialism' and higher education: The management of performances and cultures in universities in the United Kingdom. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 8(1), 47-70.

Drysdale, L., & Goode, H. (2024). The Digital Divide: Insights into an Uneven Playing Field. In *The Power of Technology in School Leadership during COVID-19: Insights from the Field* (pp. 121-134). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Du, J., & Lapsley, I. (2019). The reform of UK universities: a management dream, an academic nightmare? *Abacus*, 55(3), 452-482. <https://doi.org/10.1111/abac.12167>.

Edwards, C., Gregory, L., & Hardie, L. (2021). Setting up a Pilot Peer Mentoring Programme in the Online Environment. *Journal of Rights and Justice*, 2, 7-17.

Ersin, P. & Atay, D. (2021), "Exploring online mentoring with preservice teachers in a pandemic and the need to deliver quality education", *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, Vol. 10 No. 2, pp. 203-215. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-11-2020-0077>.

Fisk, R. P., Gallan, A. S., Joubert, A. M., Beekhuizen, J., Cheung, L., & Russell-Bennett, R. (2023). Healing the digital divide with digital inclusion: enabling human capabilities. *Journal of Service Research*, 26(4), 542-559.

Haidusek-Niazy, S., Huyler, D. & Carpenter, R.E. (2023). Mentorship reconsidered: A case study of K-12 teachers' mentor-mentee relationships during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Soc Psychol Educ* 26, 1269-1288. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-023-09788-w>.

Hammoudi Halat, D., Soltani, A., Dalli, R., Alsarraj, L., & Malki, A. (2023). Understanding and fostering mental health and well-being among university faculty: A narrative review. *Journal of clinical medicine*, 12(13), 4425. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jcm12134425>.

Hazarika, N., & Dagar, K. (2024). Educational Technology to Promote Social Entrepreneurship Education in the COVID Pandemic Era. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Emerging Economies*, 10(1), 41-50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23939575231210182>.

Heng, K., & Sol, K. (2021). Online learning during COVID-19: Key challenges and suggestions to enhance effectiveness. *Cambodian Journal of Educational Research*, 1(1), 3-16

Holmes, H. (2024). *The Materiality of Nothing: Exploring our everyday relationships with objects absent and present* (p. 162). Taylor & Francis.

Hugo Horta & Huan Li (2023) Nothing but publishing: the overriding goal of PhD students in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macau, *Studies in Higher Education*, 48:2, 263- 282, DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2022.2131764.

Giamellaro, M., & Siegel, D. (2023). Bridging and brokering across communities of practice: A STEM coach's role in helping teachers access expertise. *EURASIA Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education*, 19(3), em2232.

Jimenez, J., Paterson, R. & Specht, D. (2023). Doctoral writing through a trajectorial lens: an exploratory study on challenges, strategies and relationships. *High Educ*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-023-01019-7>.

Güler, M., Taylan, R. D., Baki, M., Demirel, D., Çelik, D., Güzel, E. B., & Tutak, F. A. (2023).

- Junn, J. C., Whitman, G. J., Wasnik, A. P., Wang, M. X., Guelfguat, M., Goodman, E. D., & Middlebrooks, E. H. (2023). Virtual mentoring: a guide to navigating a new age in mentorship. *Academic radiology*, 30(4), 749-754. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acra.2022.08.014>.
- Khan, R., Jahan, A., Sultana, S., NaushaadKabir, M. M., Haider, M. Z., & Roshid, M. M. (2021). Accessing Online Instruction amidst COVID-19 in Bangladesh: barriers and Coping Strategies. *Language Teaching Research Quarterly*, 22, 33-48. <https://doi.org/10.32038/ltrq.2021.22.03>.
- Ko, J. (2024). Exploring Transformational Leadership Practices among School Leaders in Korean Schools. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 50(1), 77-97. <https://doi.org/10.9734/AJESS/2024/v50i11240>.
- Lasater, K., Smith, C., Pijanowski, J., & Brady, K. P. (2021). Redefining mentorship in an era of crisis: Responding to COVID-19 through compassionate relationships. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 10(2), 158-172.
- Lee, H. H., & Gargroetzi, E. (2023). "It's like a double-edged sword": Mentor Perspectives on Ethics and Responsibility in a Learning Analytics-Supported Virtual Mentoring Program. *Journal of Learning Analytics*, 10(1), 85-100. <https://doi.org/10.18608/jla.2023.7787>.
- Lall, S.A <https://doi.org/>, Chen, L.W. & Mason, D.P. (2023). Digital platforms and entrepreneurial support: a field experiment in online mentoring. *Small Bus Econ* 61, 631–654. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-022-00704-8>.
- Li, C., Jiang, Y., Ng, P. H., Dai, Y., Cheung, F., Chan, H. C., & Li, P. (2024). Collaborative Learning in the Edu-Metaverse Era: An Empirical Study on the Enabling Technologies. *IEEE Transactions on Learning Technologies*.
- A.Lin Goodwin, Joanna Madalińska-Michalak & Maria Assunção Flores (2023) Rethinking teacher education in/for challenging times: reconciling enduring tensions, imagining new possibilities, *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 46:5, 840-855, DOI: 10.1080/02619768.2023.2299926.
- Luedke, C. L., Collom, G. D., & Henderson, T. N. (2023). Developing a culture of mentoring: promoting, experiencing, and engaging in mentoring through a transitional undergraduate research program for students of color. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 31(1), 39-60.
- Maiya, A. K., & Aithal, P. S. (2023). A Review-based Research Topic Identification on How to Improve the Quality Services of Higher Education Institutions in Academic, Administrative, and Research Areas. Maiya, AK, & Aithal, PS,(2023). *International Journal of Management, Technology, and Social Sciences (IJMTS)*, 8(3), 103-153.<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.821915>.
- Man, M. N. S., & Manaf, H. A. (2023). Analysis of E-Mentoring Platform for Future Leaders' Development. *e-BANGI Journal*, 20(1). <https://doi.org/10.17576/ebangi.2023.2001.10>.
- Mavuru, L., Ramaila, S., & Fonseca, K. (2024). Enhancing Supervisory Practice: Reflecting on the Enablers and Constraints for Meaningful Postgraduate Student Development. In *Doctoral Supervision in Southern Africa: From Theory to Practice* (pp. 173-191). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-46899-5_12.
- Minerbo, C., & Brito, L. A. L. (2022). An integrated perspective of value creation and capture: a systematic literature review. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 37(4), 768- 789.
- Mohamed, B. H., Disli, M., Al-Sada, M. B. S., & Koç, M. (2022). Investigation on human development needs, challenges, and drivers for transition to sustainable development: the case of qatar. *Sustainability*, 14(6), 3705.
- Mooney, A., Thomas, M. K. E., & Blake, D. (2024). The 'Butterfly effect' of mentoring practices in school-university partnerships. In *Creating, Sustaining, and Enhancing Purposeful School-University Partnerships: Building Connections Across Diverse Educational Systems* (pp. 141-160). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.
- Mkrtychyan, V. A., & Gurin, G. G. (2022). Mentoring Role in Novice Teacher Training Process: A Review of International Experience. *European Proceedings of Educational Sciences*.
- Mullen, C. A. (2021). Online doctoral mentoring in a pandemic: help or hindrance to academic progress on dissertations?. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-06-2020-0029>.
- Niemczyk, E. K. (2024). Global research capacity building among academic researchers. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 54(1), 91-109. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2022.2078956>.
- Ngoc, N. M., & Tien, N. H. (2023). Quality of Scientific Research and World Ranking of Public and Private Universities in Vietnam. *International journal of public sector performance management*.
- Ochieng, V. O., & Waithanji Ngware, M. (2023). Adoption of Education Technologies for Learning During COVID-19 Pandemic: The Experiences of Marginalized and Vulnerable Learner Populations in Kenya. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 32(4), 464-487. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10567879221076081>.
- Orakova, A., Nametkulova, F., Issayeva, G., Mukhambetzhanova, S., Galimzhanova, M., & Rezuanova, G. (2024). The Relationships between Pedagogical and Technological Competence and Digital Literacy Level of Teachers. *Journal of Curriculum Studies Research*, 6(1), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.46303/jcsr.2024.2>.

Patel, K. N., Lincoln, B., Gomez, L. A. M., Lopez, A. C., Ting, T., Lund, T. J., & Liang, B. (2023). MentorOn: A peer mentoring program developed for COVID-19 times. *Journal of Community Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.23030>.

Peter, S., E. G., & Gupta, A. (2024). Navigating the digital financial landscape: unraveling the impact of financial behavior traits on women-owned enterprises in the new normal perspective. *Cogent Business & Management*, 11(1), 2296570. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975>.

Rampersad, R. (2024) "Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Mentoring as Support for African Women's Academic Career Trajectories", *African Journal of Inter/Multidisciplinary Studies*, 6(1), pp. 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.51415/ajims.v6i1.1423>.

Robinson, L.E., Valido, A., Drescher, A. et al. Teachers, Stress, and the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Qualitative Analysis. *School Mental Health* 15, 78–89 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-022-09533-2>.

Russo, D. (2023). Pandemic Pedagogy: Evaluating Remote Education Strategies during COVID- 19. *arXivpreprintarXiv:2308.15847*.

<https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2308.15847>.

Sato, S. N., Condes Moreno, E., Rubio-Zarapuz, A., Dalamitros, A. A., Yañez-Sepulveda, R., Tornero- Aguilera, J. F., & Clemente-Suárez, V. J. (2023). Navigating the New Normal: Adapting Online and Distance Learning in the Post-Pandemic Era. *Education Sciences*, 14(1), 19. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14010019>.

Shepherd, S. (2017). Managerialism: An ideal type. *Studies in Higher Education*, 43(9), 1668– 1678.

Spina, N., K. Smithers, J. Harris, and I. Mewburn. 2022. "Back to Zero? Precarious Employment in Academia Amongst 'Older' Early Career Researchers, a Life-Course Approach." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 43 (4): 534–549. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2022.2057925>.

Sprute, K. M., & Underdown, K. O. (2024). Structural Empowerment: The Next Step for University Support of Online Adjunct Faculty. In *Adjunct Faculty in Online Higher Education: Best Practices for Teaching Adult Learners* (pp. 247-263). IGI Global.

Taberner, A.M.2018. "The Marketisation of the English Higher Education Sector and Its Impact on Academic Staffand the Nature of Their Work." *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*26 (1): 129–52. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-07-2017-1198>.

Turner, G. W., Chhetry, D. S., & Round, R. (2023). Mentoring social work adjunct educators: A collaborative autoethnography provides a blueprint for support. *International Social Work*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/00208728231209473>.

Villalon, J., & Nebria, E. (2024). MODERATING EFFECT OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ON COLLEGE STUDENTS'STRESS AND BURNOUT. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 11(3).

Wright, K., Levine, D. K., Salcido, M., Garringer, M., Almendra, T., Bazell, A., & Kaufman, M. R. (2024). From crisis to capacity: Lessons learned from youth e-mentoring during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*, 100400. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2024.100400>.

Yang, M., Oh, Y., Lim, S., & Kim, T. (2023). Teaching with collective resilience during COVID-19: Korean teachers and collaborative professionalism. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 126, 104051. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2023.104051>.

Zielińska, A., Lebeda, I., Gop, A., & Karwowski, M. (2024). Teachers as Creative Agents: How Self-Beliefs and Self-Regulation Drive Teachers' Creative Activity. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 102267. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2024.102267>