

ACCESS, EQUITY AND QUALITY: LIMITS AND POSSIBILITIES OF E-LEARNING IN THE AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

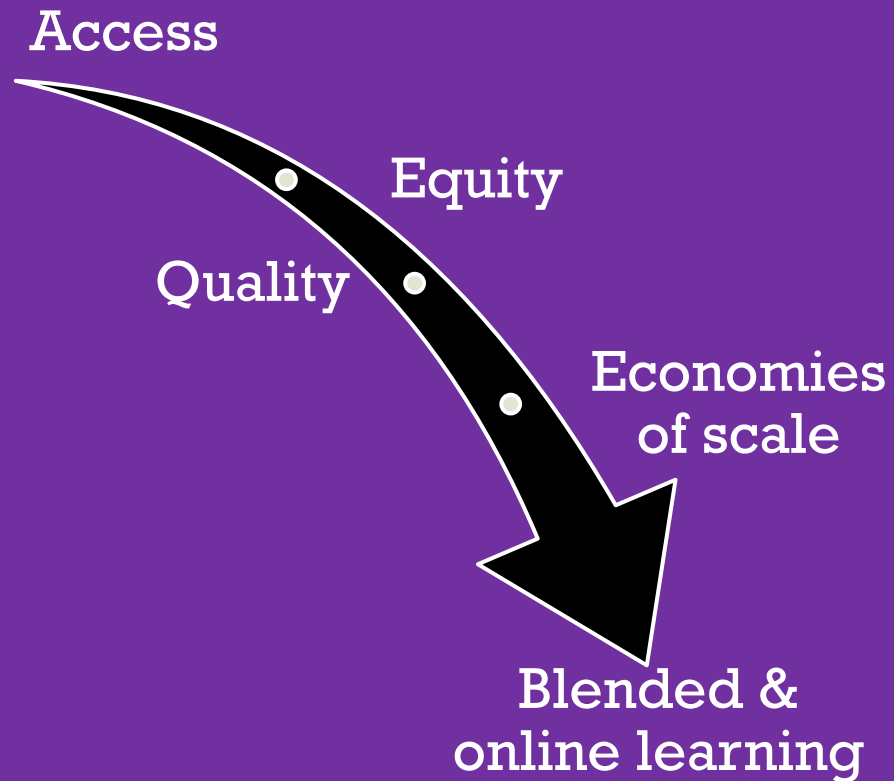
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INTRODUCTION-TRAJECTORY



MAJOR CHALLENGES

- Unequal access to ICTs and lack of a robust, cost effective, and scalable bandwidth.
- Digital literacies: capacity of students & staff to take advantage affordances brought about by Web 2.0 technologies.
- Pedagogical practices: quality of learning experiences & epistemological access;
- Independent learning, meta cognition and bridging the transactional distance in online teaching and learning-structure and dialogue; and
- Slow pace in the development of M-learning, OERs and MOOCs;

UNEQUAL ACCESS TO ICTS

- Macro economic and political difficulties across the continent
- Urban and rural divide
- Cost of bandwidth and connectivity
- Development of Educational Research Networks to broker bandwidth and increase accessibility

DIGITAL LITERACY

- The University of South Africa (Unisa) largest distance education university in Africa with 430 000 students.
- The challenge: digital literacy for both students and academics.
- Capacity development for digital literacy now a major activity in the African academy to bring about a new thinking regarding online teaching and learning.

ADOPTION OF THE SEMANTIC WEB

Affordances

Capacity of information storage and retrieval

Capacity for non human agents

Capacity of the internet to support learning

PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES: QUALITY, INNOVATION AND BLENDED LEARNING

- **Challenge:**
 - Enhancing learner autonomy & self-directed learning.
- **Teaching & learning philosophy:**
 - Constructivism – students critical in the construction of meaning and knowledge inside and outside the classroom.
- **Development of learning architectures that emphasize learning in which dialogue and continuous feedback are essential to the teaching and learning process.**

KEY ELEMENTS OF MODEL

- Dialogue and feed back essential between:
 1. Learner & academic as a facilitator of educational experiences;
 2. Learner & content;
 3. Learner & peers;
 4. Learner & context; and
 5. Learner & technology essential in educational process.

MODEL ENGENDERS NEW FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE

- Problematic knowledge & knowledge integration;
- Higher order thinking & depth of knowledge;
- Depth of students' understandings & substantive conversations
- Use of meta-language & academic engagement;

MODEL ENGENDERS NEW FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE

- Cultural or indigenous knowledge systems;
- Valuing differences based on race, gender, sexual orientation, and class
- Group identities in learning communities; and
- Student's self-regulation.

Source: Bob Lingard (2010:173).

TRANSACTIONAL DISTANCE AND STRUCTURE

According to Moore (2013:67):

“a common cause of failure or at least courses falling short of expectations is failure to design the balance of structure and dialogue that is appropriate for a particular student population”.

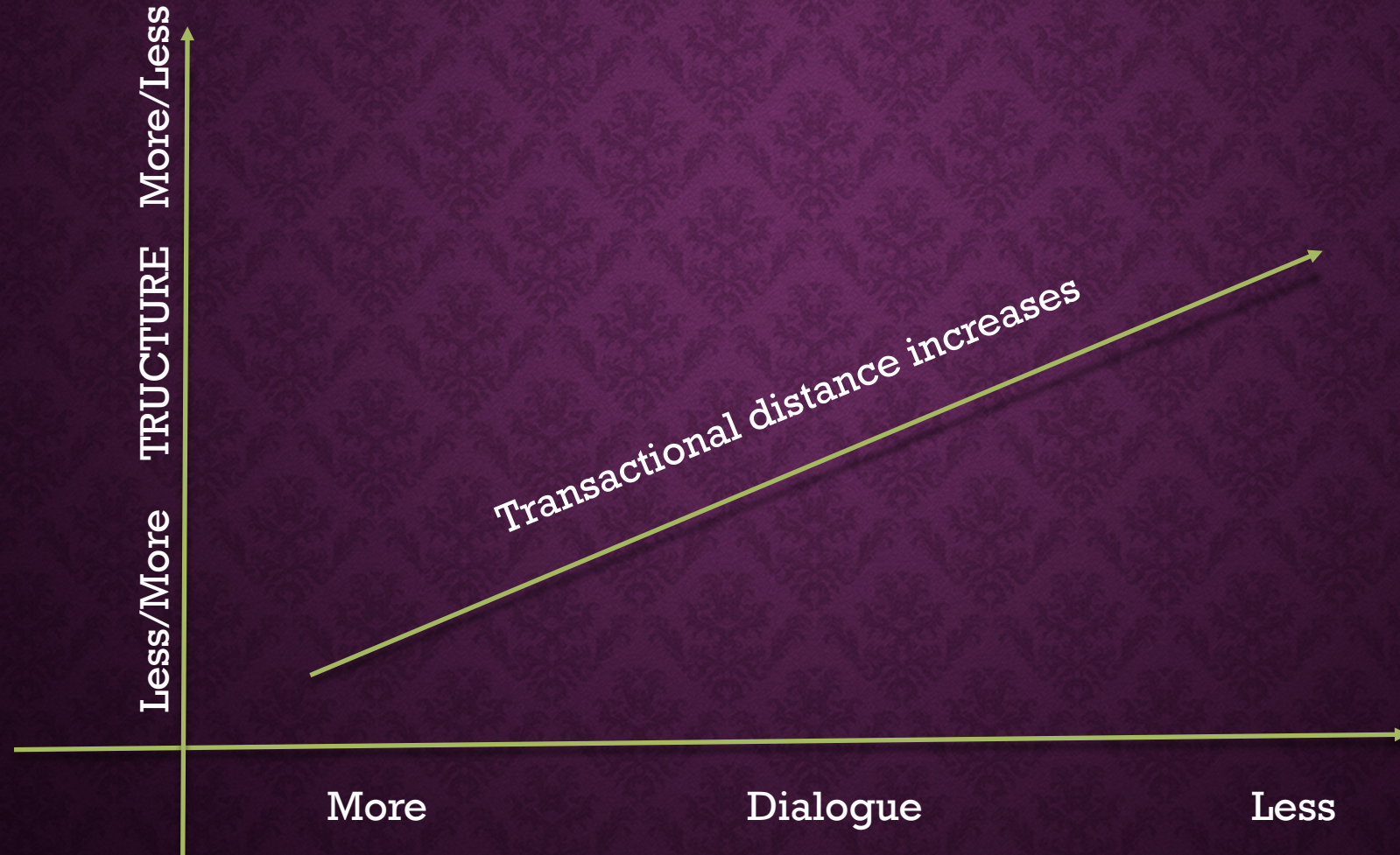
QUESTIONS CRITICAL IN MINIMIZING TRANSACTIONAL DISTANCE

- Is learning self-initiated and self-motivated?
- Who identifies goals and objectives and selects problems for study?
- Who determines the pace, the sequence, and the methods of information gathering?

QUESTIONS CRITICAL IN MINIMIZING TRANSACTIONAL DISTANCE

- Is emphasis on gathering information external to the learner?
- How flexible is each instructional process to the requirements of the learner?
- How is usefulness & quality of learning judged?
- What provision is there for the development of learner's ideas & for creative solutions to problems?

STRUCTURE & TRANSACTIONAL DISTANCE



ADOPTION OF MOOCS & OPEN EDUCATION RESOURCES

- Financial reward mechanism and promotion process which has made it difficult for the development of MOOCS and OERs across the higher education sector in South Africa.
- OERs: OER Africa, African Virtual University and a number of African universities involved in development of MOOCS-Quality concerns

Thank you.