

**Research Article****ENHANCING FIRST YEAR STUDENT LEARNING  
THROUGH BLENDED LEARNING AT UNIVERSITY OF  
BOTSWANA****TUMANI MALINGA, POLOKO NTSHWARANG, NONOFO LOSIKE-SEDIMO**Department of Social Work Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Botswana. Email: [malingat@ub.ac.bw](mailto:malingat@ub.ac.bw)**Received 2021.08.24-Accepted 2021.09.20****ABSTRACT**

Higher education settings differ from high school which normally use the traditional way of teaching. Students entering university settings from high school are faced with challenges as they adjust and adapt to the new ways of instruction. To ensure retention and graduation of students, the University of Botswana encourages diversifying teaching strategies that can keep students interested in their learning. The First Year Learning Experience Seminar was introduced to orient students to the university setting. Instructors who ran the seminar reflected on their teaching and used the Student Evaluation of Course and Teaching (SECAT) to examine how students view the strategies used. Students' appreciated the blended learning method as indicated by their morale in-online and in-class discussions. Over the years, there has been reduced class absenteeism and increased student retention. This chapter indicates the importance of adopting diverse learning strategies to ensure students active participation and satisfaction with their learning.

**Key words:** traditional way of teaching, SECAT, FYLES.**INTRODUCTION**

Higher education learning, especially at university level can be challenging for both students and lecturers. Students at higher education level such as college or university come from diverse backgrounds that often require different strategies for learning to ensure their successful retention and graduation. For example, students differ in terms of employment status, economic status, marital status, sexual orientations, and cultural backgrounds, as well as differing childhood experiences that often affect normal functioning that present in various forms such as social, psychological, emotional and learning challenges just to name a few. Students also have different learning styles and personalities. There are those who are introverts and those who are extroverts. Therefore, lecturers must accommodate the diverse backgrounds and personalities of students and provide primary support to the students to ensure students' successful learning. However, as academics they often grapple with different issues such as keeping up with the university's expectations about transforming teaching and learning as well as dealing with the diverse needs of large student groups. In recognition of the challenges experienced by academics McShane (2004, p. 3) highlights "social expectations, pressures from the professions, and new university management practices designed to align the university with the external world are placing particular demands on academics." However, Hativa (2000) argues that institutional factors have limited impact on teachers' planning of teaching and learning as the strategies depend on enduring assumptions embedded in the

disciplines, as well as educational beliefs to which teachers have been socialized within the disciplinary context.

In light of the foregoing statement, the University of Botswana is no exception as it developed a First Year Learning Experience Seminar (FYLES) and a Learning and Teaching Policy (University of Botswana, 2008) as strategies to ensure that student have conducive learning, retention and success after graduation from the University. The University of Botswana Learning and Teaching Policy underscores effective training of students for work and citizenship so that they become economically and socially effective (University of Botswana, 2008). Therefore lecturers facilitating FYLES use a blended method of teaching and learning to train, support and enhance students' graduate attributes such as self-directed learning; lifelong learning; problem solving; interpersonal and communications skills; organizational and teamwork skills; social responsibility and leadership skills; critical and creative thinking; and accountability skills. A blended model uses both traditional and modern methods of teaching and learning. Masie (2002) defined "blended learning as — the use of two or more distinct methods of training" (p. 59). According to Garrison and Vaughan (2008), blended learning approach embraces the traditional values of face-to-face teaching and integrates the best practices of eLearning, to augment and expand the efficiency of teaching and learning in higher education across disciplines. Dangwal (2017) underscores that in addition to face to face and

eLearning, blended learning integrates direct instruction, indirect instruction, collaborative teaching, and individualized computer assisted learning.

In FYLES, lecturers blend eLearning, face-to-face learning and community service to give students assignments and class activities that foster the above enlisted graduate attributes emphasized by the University of Botswana's (2008) Learning and Teaching Policy. At the end of the seminar, students engage in an online Student Evaluation of Course and Teaching (SECAT) to reflect on their learning experiences about the seminar and seminar facilitator. eLearning is the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to foster online interaction by integrating e-mail and eLearning tools, discussions, and assessments. Nichols (2003) defines eLearning as 'the use of various technological tools that are either Web-based, Web-distributed or Web-capable' (pg. 2). eLearning is considered a ubiquitous 'catch-all' term for describing learning with the use of technology (Berge, 2002). Nichols (2003) argues that it combines strengths of face to face with distance forms of education using technology. The introduction of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) such as eLearning also shows that university academics or lectures no longer have the autonomy and control over methods of learning and teaching because it provides opportunity for scrutiny and assessment by both students and other academicians (McShane, 2004).

On the one hand, in the context of FYLES face to face teaching is a form of learning where the lecturer attempts to enhance dialogue and debates with students during class lessons. Face to face is an approach where the instructor and learner are in the same location at same time (Redmond, 2011). It allows the instructor to offer structure and immediate feedback, and respond immediately to questions (Graham, 2019). On the other hand, community service refers to voluntary or unpaid work in the community that is not linked to the school curriculum, although it may be encouraged by or even arranged by the school (Niemi, Hepburn & Chapman, 2000; Serow, 1991). Community service gives participants opportunities to network and familiarize themselves with their social environment. It enhances civic participation (Hart, Youniss, & Atkins, 2007) as it enables participants to get the opportunity to learn about communities and take active participation in community development. Furthermore, it enhances students' career planning because as they network and engage with community members, they acquire knowledge on available resources for personal career development.

The blended teaching and learning model is student-centered as it offers students flexibility in learning and it addresses student diversity by ensuring that students are not confined or restricted to one style of learning. Thus, students have an opportunity to experience different methods of learning to accommodate their differing learning needs and capabilities. Using various teaching methods complements and enrich each other (McDonald, 2002) and enhances learner satisfaction. This is supported by Garrison and Vaughan (2008) who indicates that blended learning approach in higher education offers an interactive student engagement through communication technologies, which leads to achieving higher-order learning outcomes. Having noted the various method used in

FYLES to support student learning, the research has indicated that students can see the connection between the community and schooling when they use their service experience as a basis for critical reflection in the classroom and the role of the citizen in those communities (Kirlin, 2002). Therefore, this paper is based on the reflections of the seminar instructors and augmented by the results of Student Evaluation of Course and Teaching (SECAT) as well as FYLES evaluation report to discuss the benefits of integrating in-class, online and community service to support students' learning. The paper starts by providing background information on FYLES.

## Background

When the University of Botswana (UB) realized that the number of students' enrollment were diminishing as a result of an increased competition with student's recruitment and retention from other tertiary institutions, it came up with a strategy to continue to be the most preferred university in Botswana. In response to research done elsewhere that the first week and first year of University life to a large extent determines student success, the university's programmes had to be crafted in ways that value student success, not only in academia, but as human beings, thereby positively affecting their outlook towards life (Mupedziswa & Ntseane, 2010). In view of the foregoing ideas, the University of Botswana's primary strategy was for the institution to create a favorable learning environment founded on a ground-breaking idea that will enable students to differentiate UB teaching and learning methods from those of other institutions.

Consequently, FYLES was developed to effectively prepare students for life, work, and citizenship so that they become economically and socially effective in contributing to the development of the country (University of Botswana, 2008). This is also supported by the university's emphasis on the need for curricular that enhances self-directed learning; develop skills in problem solving, communication, teamwork, social responsibility, and leadership; and to enhance critical and creative thinking as well as accountability (University of Botswana, 2008). Thus, establishment of the FYLES also intended to advance student success academically, economically, psychologically and socially. FYLES was introduced to help first year students to adjust and adapt to the new university environment, as well as teach them how to balance academic life and social life.

FYLES was developed on the basis that admission to university brings with it some anxieties of entering a new environment. Alao, Forchen, Roy and Tidimane (2004) in their study among University of Botswana students, argued that admission to university bring with it academic challenges and other stressful life events such as family, relationships, finances, peer pressure, sexual issues, and academic problems. As a result of stressful life events that are experienced by students, they tend to turn to alcohol and other substances which lead to loss of effectiveness in their lives and affect their learning process (Alao, Roy, Tidimane, Mophuting, Kgosiidintsi, Odirile, Kgathi, Pilane & Semphandile, 2005). Based on such studies, the management of the University of Botswana saw it fit to introduce FYLES which acts as

an orientation to help students adjust and cope to the new environment. The seminar is designed to help students make a transition from secondary school to a higher education environment and enable students to develop life skills and foster the right attitudes. Further, it prepares students for learning and career planning. In addition, it helps students to acquire competencies and interpersonal skills that will enable them to communicate effectively, make informed decisions, solve their personal problems, and manage relationships as well as the different aspects of their lives in a positive manner.

As indicated earlier, FYLES focuses on enhancing learning competences that correspond to the general graduate attributes of the University of Botswana (UB). The graduates' attributes are qualities or skills that each student of the UB is expected to have acquired by the time they graduate. Additionally, the seminar was designed against the background of the University of Botswana's (2008) Learning and Teaching Policy which is based on the principle of "intentional learning." Intentional learning is when students or learners deliberately make plans and strategize about their learning so that it satisfies their personal and post study goals (Mollman & Candela, 2018). It tends to promote self-directed learning because it involves a situation where learners are empowered to be autonomous by being allowed to choose the content of the materials to be learned and the methods or techniques of learning. As a result, learners are given the opportunity to be self-directed as they acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to use in solving real life situations, and thus render lifelong learning (Mollman & Candela, 2018). The policy emphasizes creation of a "...positive learning environment and delivery of effective educational practices that help students learn to integrate and apply their learning, to become lifelong learners and acquire appropriate graduate attributes for living, working, and managing change" (University of Botswana, 2008, pp. 5-6). As indicated in the University of Botswana Learning and Teaching Policy, student learning should:

- Be challenging and promote enquiry in learning through exposure to flexible, technology-enhanced, innovative learning and teaching strategies that create a highly engaging and relevant learning experience
- Ensure practical, where students learn how to apply knowledge to the solution of real-world problems
- Use information and communication technologies that allow flexible access to learning resources, lecturers and other students, and to actively participate in evaluating and improving the university curriculum
- Apply a learner-centered approach, where students engage in reflective and critical thinking supported by ongoing scholarship and learning
- Promote an active sense of citizenship and social responsibility and display a commitment to the economic, social and cultural development of the diverse communities of Botswana (University of Botswana, 2008, pp. 5-6).

To achieve these aims, the FYLES blends various teaching and learning methods such as face to face lectures, community work, and eLearning. The combination of the foregoing mentioned methods was selected to support the University of Botswana's principle of "intentional learning" that underscores instructional strategies that support active and self-directed learning (University of Botswana, 2009). Kenny and Kendall (2001) argue that self-directed learning that warrant an equilibrium occurs between independent learning and course content especially for skill-based courses such as nursing. Thus self-directed learning (SDL) is an integrated approach to learning that uses teaching and learning methods that consider the effects of external factors such as the competence of the facilitator as well as the impact of learning strategies on the cognitive and psychological development of the learner (Garrison, 1997). Self-directed learning is both a skill and a necessary competency that students should have because it is both a process and an outcome (Kranzow & Hyland, 2016). As a process it gives the learners control of their learning experience as they get to choose how they learn and as an outcome, learners have the opportunity to acquire life skills such as self-management and self-determination (Kranzow & Hyland, 2016). Thus, FYLES strives to offer students a learning environment that radiates SDL qualities such as learner independence, critical reflection, student engagement as well as less control of the learning process by the teacher.

## METHODOLOGY

### Reflections from seminar instructors

Critical reflection is a process used to assess the ways people think about things, and how they affirm discourses through examining their implicit assumptions (Copeland, Birmingham, de la Cruz, & Lewin, 1993; Fook, 2002). This process can give an opportunity for one to improve. For example, in teaching and learning settings an instructor can take stock of how they teach and how they can alter and improve their teaching in the future in ways that are beneficial for the learners (Haras, 2018). It allows for the interconnections between observations, past experiences, and judgment to plan for the future (Kolb, 1984). Reflection functions as the metacognitive process to evaluate and improve (Haras, 2018). Morley (2008) argues that reflection could unearth consciousness and raise awareness. Reflection gives meaning to experience and promotes a deep approach to learning as it inspires one to reframe problems, question their own assumptions, and look at situations from multiple perspectives as they analyze their lived experiences (Sugerman, Doherty, & Garvey, 2000). It allows one to identify gaps in their knowledge and address the gaps. Schön (1987) identified two types of reflection which are reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action is where the teacher responds to a problem in the moment and changing things accordingly, whereas reflection-on-action is looking back at what happened in the classroom and using this knowledge to affect future action (Schön, 1987).

The type of reflection that was adopted by the authors, who have been the instructors of FYLES since inception is the "reflect-on-action". They were guided by the seminar syllabus and examined the teaching strategies they used for the seminar which include face to face

instruction, online teaching, and student engagement in community service. The questions that guided the “reflection-on-action” as articulated by Schön (1987) are as follows: What happened? How did you feel about the interaction? What was the impact of your actions on the situation? Was the outcome what you wanted?

### **Results from student evaluation of course and teaching**

The paper also sorts insights from Student Evaluation of Course and Teaching (SECAT). SECAT is a standard questionnaire of up to 20 items and have provision of open-ended questions. SECAT provides for evaluation of teaching and evaluation of the course. The instructors read through the open-ended responses where the students commented about the course and the teaching. The instructors were interested in the response to the question; What did you like most about this course? This is a general question where the students narrated about the teaching methods used as well as the skills they acquired in the process.

### **Methods of teaching and learning in the FYLES**

FYLES mixes traditional face-to-face learning with eLearning and community service strategies to expose students to diverse learning methods. This reciprocal learning connects well with the University of Botswana’s learning policy which emphasizes a blended learning strategy. A blended teaching strategy requires one to use innovative and different teaching strategies to enhance learning. Varying teaching strategies has several benefits for both the student and the facilitator. A blended course is beneficial in that it meets the diverse learning needs of students (Lloyd-Smith, 2010). It meaningfully enhances the learning experience through conceptualizing and restructuring the teaching and learning transaction (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Dangwal (2017) argues that a blended course affords both facilitator and students more time for creative and cooperative exercises as students have more opportunities for social interaction in both face to face and eLearning. Garrison and Vaughan (2008) further illustrates that blended learning generates and sustains community of inquiry beyond the classroom.

Another advantage of blended learning is that it enhances and spreads the learning and provides a platform that can efficiently manage large classes (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). It also offers the facilitator more variety for delivering course content (Singh, 2003). Since students have varying ways of learning, the diversity of teaching methods within a blended learning allows student engagement as they have options to interact more with the course material in the best approach that suits their learning style (Young, 2002). Young (2002) further indicates that blended learning offers a voice to shy students who cannot engage in the classroom setting. Students have time to think and process the information that they want to share before posting it online and there is an opportunity for less intimidating setting (Lloyd-Smith, 2010). Unlike in situations where only one approach is used, a blended method provides an extended scope of communication (Dangwal, 2017). Furthermore, Dangwal (2017) illustrates that blended learning reinforces

professionalism as students develop qualities like self-motivation, self-responsibility and discipline.

### **Face-to-face learning**

This model demands that both the student and learner should be physically present in the same location at a given time. Majority of students admitted at the University of Botswana come from a secondary school background where the pedagogy focused on the didactic and authoritarian classroom practices (Tabulawa, 1997). This is influenced by the principle of *Botho* which refers to respect, good manners, good character and playing expected roles (Akindele & Trennepohl, 2008). As they enter the university, students come with the same mindset where they expect to be passive and non-responsive learners as a way of showing respect to authority figures (Akindele & Trennepohl, 2008). However, university learning is different as students are expected to be active learners. Face-face methods such as those used during FYLES facilitate dialogue and enhance personal connection between the instructor and the students. Therefore, it is during class lesson that the lecturer has the responsibility to encourage students to actively participate in class by constantly asking open ended questions and deliberately and randomly selecting students to give verbal feedback on subjects of discussion. This is different from traditional face to face teaching where the lecturer or teacher does most of the talking, giving students little or no time to share their views on the subject discussed.

Traditional or face-to-face instructional environments encourage passive learning and do not pay attention to the needs of an individual (Banathy, 1994). In the face-to-face model, students have an opportunity to dialogue with the instructor about the content as it is being presented (Johnson, Aragon, & Shaik, 2000). This gives students the opportunity to get clarification and examples during live discussions. Furthermore, students can receive dynamic forms of support and live feedback which can further be clarified. For example, they can be given homework which they can later present and get feedback in class before final submission. Besides the interaction with the instructor, face to face model offers students the opportunity to interact with their peers to discuss projects and build social relationships (Johnson, Aragon, & Shaik, 2000).

### **Community service**

Community service is the engagement of students in activities that primarily focus on the service being provided in a community setting (Furco, 1996). It is closely related to service learning because it enables school based and/or community-based professionals to employ effective teaching strategies that emphasize student-centered, interactive, experiential learning which in the process exposes students to challenges facing communities (Furco, 1996). People who get involved in community service especially those who assist needy people tend to have greater life satisfaction, self-worth, and self-esteem, and it gives them a sense of purpose in life (Thoits & Hewitt, 2001).

Community service is also used as a program to enhance experiential learning. Experiential learning is an educational technique and type of learning that entails the integration of both lecture-classroom learning as well as the life experiences of the realities of the content

being taught (Kolb, 2015). It is helpful to incorporate community service in the curricula to ensure that students take it seriously and so that they can have practical experience of what they are taught in class. Niemi, Hepburn and Chapman (2000) articulate that community service should be compulsory because some students who mostly need to learn civic responsibility may not do it if given the choice not to do it. College students who lack opportunities to provide community service tend to be more concerned with getting higher grades or completing their studies hence they pass chances to be helpful or get involved in civic activities, and in the process miss out on the actual experience of being helpful (Niemi, Hepburn & Chapman, 2000). Community service provides an opportunity for personal growth and accountability (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). The benefits of community service can be linked to the following functions of volunteerism by Clary and Snyder (1999) who stress that it helps the participant to learn important values such as humanitarianism by; exploring, learning and exercising skills that are often not used. Furthermore, community service, according to Clary and Snyder (1999) enhance psychological development and help students to gain career experience as well as strengthening social relationships. As such, making community service compulsory in FYLES promotes a spirit of volunteerism and continuous motivation to help others.

In the FYLES, students are required to engage in community work. The objective is for students to develop and improve their interpersonal skills. Through this engagement, it is hoped it would strengthen and develop student sense of civic responsibility within the larger community. In the seminar, students are expected to work in groups, and they choose an agency, organization or resource center where they will do their community service. These agencies or units are either located on or off campus. In the agency the students can engage on a project of their interests in line with the agency mission and goals. They are required to invest a minimum of 20 hours of service in a semester. At the end of the community service they are required to write a report as a group which reflects on their experiences during the time they were engaged in the service. Some of the topics they reflect on are community needs, impact of their service both personally and professionally; lessons learned and to provide recommendations for improving the learning experience. The students also get the opportunity to discuss their community experiences during weekly lessons.

Some scholars have indicated that community participation and volunteer work further develop academic skills, because participants are able to relate what they learn in class with what happens in the community (Markus, Howard & King, 1993). Markus, Howard and King (1993) illustrate that when students are engaged in community work, it enriches education because they can integrate their experiences from the community into the classroom. Therefore, through community participation, students can link theory with practice as well as apply what they have learned in real-world contexts in the classroom and upgrade their analytical skills.

### **eLearning**

eLearning environments are being adopted in many institutions of higher learning (Sugar, Martindale, &

Crawley, 2007). eLearning environments or eLearning as it is commonly known refers to the use of different kind of information and communication technologies (ICT) and electronic devices in education (Guragain, 2016). It is a computer based educational tool or system, which allows sharing of information in videos, slideshows, and PDF among others (Bhandari, 1997). eLearning allows communication between the students and instructor through chats and message forums. Furthermore, it allows learning through reading blogs, participating in online forums, threaded email discussions and social media (Guragain, 2016). Jonassen and Hernandez-Serrano (2002) illustrates that eLearning should integrate activity-based learning, as opposed to learning governed by content. Activity based learning allows students to focus on a problem and interact through discussion boards hence encouraging reflective thinking (Jonassen, et. al. 2002; Woods, Baker, & Hopper, 2004).

In the FYLES students are provided with on-line discussions as a way of reviewing and discussing key issues from the modules. In this seminar, students are required to use at least an hour of class time to engage on online discussions. In this platform, students would be required to read and post their comments. First, they read posted comments to get a sense of what is being discussed, and then they post their own responses. This platform is effective for those students who are independent learners or the introverts as they are in most cases hesitant to talk in the classroom.

The FYLES focuses on helping students adjust and adapt to the new environment, more time is spent in the face to face instruction to avoid student feeling socially isolated and to avoid dependency on technology. FYLES is offered three hours a week. The three hours are divided such that face to face learning takes two hours to allow for in-depth discussions while the other hour is reserved for eLearning. All the online discussions are followed up by face to face discussions to clarify any confusion that might have transpired. The eLearning is convenient for them as they can study at their convenience because materials can be accessed anytime, and they do not have to be present in the classroom. Furthermore, the eLearning platform enables students to have access to up to date materials, which are available and can be reused for longer times. Guragain (2016) also illustrates that the eLearning platform is a flexible way of learning. Even though this platform is considered effective and beneficial, Ntshwarang, Malinga, & Losike-Sedimo (2021) argue that where there is uncoordinated and unavailability of resources, teaching and learning can be impeded.

### **Integrating face-to-face, eLearning and community service**

It was mentioned earlier that in FYLES, teaching and learning took place in three diverse ways. There was the face to face instruction, engaging in community service, and eLearning. These platforms covered the diverse needs of students, those who are introverts and those who are extroverts. Such platforms enabled students to have increased morale and satisfaction with course materials, and consequently increased class attendance and participation. Using the diverse learning platforms help in augmentation of the face to face instruction. In

addition, the community service component helps in ensuring that the skills learned in the classroom are practiced in the community setting. Edling (2000) and McDonald (2002) argue that mixing different delivery approaches is effective as it blends the advantages of the face to face with the benefits of online instruction.

The University of Botswana is still developing in ensuring that there are facilities to support online instruction (Ntshwarang, Malinga, & Losike-Sedimo, 2021), as such combining the different teaching and learning strategies had been beneficial. Even though combining teaching strategies can be time demanding, it provides flexibility on how to deliver material to the students. Researchers have argued that in cases of large classes, it helps in classroom management efficiency and increases student-led learning (Papo, 2001; Saunders & Klemming, 2003). Adding the community service component to the hybrid of face-to-face and eLearning has been advantageous for the students. In their feedback from Student Evaluation of Course and Teacher (SECAT) exercise, students indicated that the community service has been beneficial as they were able to practice some of the skills they learned during the face to face and online instruction. Some of the skills include personal and professional development. Community service provided a favorable moment for students to test some of the methods and skills learnt in the classroom setting hence they were able to build their competency to help others. Community service is an interactive learning process that allows students the ability to gain knowledge, skills, and change their temperament, intentions, beliefs and views about their communities and environment. According to Markus, Howard and King (1993), practical involvement in community service helps students to become directly engaged with the problems which give them an opportunity to interpret them in a more tangible manner. Bringle and Hatcher (1996) also alluded that community service participation through volunteerism explicitly and tactically expose students to the importance of civic responsibility when compared to other community participation services such as practice, internships, and co-op programs.

Students also indicated their appreciation of engaging in community service as it filled in the gaps not met during the face-to-face and on eLearning settings as they are able to learn how to engage in different settings besides the academic environment. For example, some of the students indicated that they learned some of the skills that they are not taught at the university, hence broadening their scope. Community service experience also helps students to critically engage with issues affecting their communities in the classroom or online (Niemi, Hepburn & Chapman 2000). As students had guided discussions in classroom and online, this allowed them to reflect on their community service experiences.

## CONCLUSION

The Student Evaluation of Course & Teaching (SECAT) and the FYLES Evaluation Report (Mupedziswa & Ntseane, 2010) that the authors considered in writing the paper indicated that the students who participated in the First Year Learning Experience Seminar (FYLES) appreciated their experience. The results indicated that the students had

the opportunity to practice skills they learned during the face-to-face discussions and during eLearning sessions. Additionally, information from the report and SECAT showed that students learned how to engage in different settings besides the academic environment because they got early exposure to professional environments, hence broadened their scope of learning.

The use of blended teaching and learning method (e-learning, face to face teaching, and community service) to support student learning proved to be a useful approach/method to educate learners at the University of Botswana. The method is significant for the educational needs of a diverse university student community, especially that most of them are secondary school graduates who are accustomed to the traditional teaching practices where teachers are often viewed as authority figures rather than co-learners. Thus, the core-discussion of the paper emphasized the benefits of integrating eLearning, face to face teaching, and community service as a strategy to boost student learning. Blending the community service component with eLearning and face to face teaching methods helped students to apply different skills and abilities as well as to appreciate what they learned in class, in the community and on eLearning. Thus said, integrating various teaching and learning approaches can further be explored in other courses across universities to see the benefits in terms of improving student learning, so that university can adopt an approach that is evidence based. However, it should be noted that in this era of the COVID-19 pandemic, as Universities are leaning more on the eLearning platforms, they should emphasize inclusiveness as not all students have access and connectivity to online platforms (World Bank, 2020). Mupedziswa, Modie-Moroka, & Malinga (2021) also highlight the importance to inequalities in the student community as some students come from resource-constrained rural communities.

## Statement of Support and Appreciation (Required)

"No external support has been received during the conduct of this study."

## Conflict of Interest Statement (Required)

"We do not have any conflict of interest declaration as the authors of the study." should be declared in the form.

## Research and Publication Ethics Statement (Required)

All the rules stated in the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were strictly considered at every stage of this research. None of the actions specified under the heading "Actions Against Scientific Research and Publication Ethics" of the directive has not been carried out. During the writing process of this study, the citations were made in accordance with the ethical rules and a bibliography was created. The study was subjected to plagiarism control.

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