



DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION IS THE HALLMARK OF THE DIGITAL ECONOMY.

APRIL 2020

COVID-19: TSIBA's Response to the New Educational Reality In 1970, futurist and author Alvin Toffler in his book, Future Shock, wrote that the 'The illiterate of the 21st Century will not be those who cannot read or write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn.' It is within this paradigm of agility and responsiveness that TSIBA Education NPC has sought to leapfrog into digital teaching and learning by embracing the new emerging reality, and by recognising that crises are often the catalysts and harbingers of innovation and improvement.

TSIBA's approach to the uncertainty brought on by COVID-19 was to appreciate the complexity of the challenge that we face by focusing on the interplay between a number of psycho-social, economic and educational variables. Therefore, the response is premised on two fundamental objectives: the wellbeing of the staff and students, followed by an incremental process of educational preparedness. Whilst the organisation is proceeding with implementing an online learning methodology, it will still endeavour to honour the embedded values of its human-centred business education model. This includes leadership and self-development, entrepreneurship, social empathy and 'paying it forward'. Therefore in pursuit of its educational mandate and objectives, TSIBA Education has embarked on a 3-phase strategy.

Phase 1 was to establish a mesh of online contact hubs which include social media and various digital platforms such as Google Hangouts and Zoom. The aims are to foster learning and support communities by maintaining regular contact with the students and as far as is possible, to ensure the emotional well-being of particularly vulnerable students during this time of uncertainty. To supplement the online communication, a bi-weekly update that includes curriculum and academic calendar amendments is emailed to students.

Phase 2 deals with the logistics of enabling online learning. Prior to the lockdown, TSIBA took the strategic decision to make available to students who were in need, Chromebook learning devices. Chromebooks will enable access to Google Classroom, the Google web service which enables academic staff to share teaching content with students



However, one of the main obstacles to digital access for many is the high cost of data in South Africa. Therefore, based on an extensive survey to determine data access, TSIBA engaged with a number of data vendors for optimal and cost-effective data bundles. The decision was that each student will be supplied with a data bundle capable of enabling online teaching and learning immediately. However, since online teaching and learning will present didactic challenges to both staff and students, there is ongoing research into the efficiencies and practicalities of a number of online teaching and learning platforms. Some of these will undergo beta testing in the ensuing weeks before implementation.

The 3rd phase of the online strategy is to migrate to a full-blended learning model; one which combines the best values of online and classroom learning, and which complies with Council on Higher Education protocol. TSIBA is already at an advanced stage in developing a new online learning management system. TSIBA's ramping up its capability to roll-out a digital online teaching and learning platform, the organisation will remain true to its mission that education be both transformational and catalytic.

Since South Africa's socio-economic, political and indeed the world's challenges require fundamental revision, central to TSIBA's mission is a human-centric and 'learning by doing' approach to teaching and learning. Finally, the new normal involves more than moving teaching and learning online. The new normal also requires educators to address fundamental social and economic inequalities. The ongoing deliberations at TSIBA Education NPC is about contextualising academics within the complex challenges facing our country and the world.

And lastly, it's about weaving sustainability into the curriculum mix and recognising that the planet is fragile, has limited resources and that it is only through collective synergy and collaboration of all roleplayers that we can build a sustainable world.

