

Equity, dignity, and justice in higher education post-COVID-19: The case of a public university in Namibia

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Abstract

COVID-19 has disrupted teaching and learning and consequently introduced pedagogical changes into higher education institutions. Institutions of higher learning shifted from the traditional face-to-face to online teaching and learning. Higher learning institutions around the world, including the University of Namibia, had to re-think, re-imagine, re-innovate and re-design the provision of accessible, equitable and quality education. Despite unreliable internet connectivity and a lack of or unstable electricity supply in remote areas, institutions resiliently continued to provide education for all students. Due to the aftermath of COVID-19 and forces of the 4th and 5th industrial revolutions (IRs), institutions have adopted the blended learning approach, which is rooted mainly in social constructivism and classical liberal theory, which advocate for equal opportunities in education, irrespective of the socio-economic background of students. The aims of blended learning include providing different modes of content delivery to encourage interaction by students, promote the acquisition of knowledge and skills through physical classrooms, and the continuation of learning processes electronically. Through a desktop review of literature on, equity, dignity and justice in general higher education, researchers focused on a public university in Namibia, during and post-COVID-19. The researchers reviewed government and university directives, policies and peer-reviewed journal articles from 2009 to 2023, which deal directly with the provision of accessible, equitable and quality higher education during and after the COVID-19 crisis from numerous databases such as EBSCO, JSTOR, SCOPUS and ERIC. The researchers retrieved 700 publications of which 30 were used for analysis. There were, however, a few related publications (2010 to 2018) that researchers looked at but did not fall between the specified periods (2019 to 2023). Data were thematically analysed, and Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework for conducting a thematic analysis guided us. The study revealed that the outbreak of COVID-19 specifically forced institutions of higher learning to rethink and subsequently redesign their teaching and learning approaches to ensure equity, inclusivity and accessibility for all as enshrined in the universal principle of the right to education. COVID-19 has brought features of inequality in our institutions of higher learning to the surface. Notwithstanding infrastructural impediments and inadequate digital literacy skills, universities are determined to provide equitable and quality education for all. Integrating blended learning into the offering of the University of Namibia is of critical importance as it has the potential to provide both face-to-face and online learning opportunities for all.

Keywords: blended learning, equity, learning management system, Moodle, online teaching, resilient

Introduction

The Academy of Tertiary Education was founded in 1980, marking the beginning of higher education in South-West Africa, as Namibia was then known. Before this, most students who wanted to pursue higher education went to South Africa or other parts of the world (Magadza, 2010). At independence, the new government of Namibia inherited an education system that was characterised by gross disparities in terms of the apportionment of resources to schools based on ethnic groups. The new government urgently embarked on setting up policies to address inequality and injustice, in the broader context of decolonising the apartheid-led education system. One such

important decolonisation policy that established the vision of the government is *Towards Education for All*, which contains five main goals for the education sector, namely access, equity, democracy, quality and efficiency (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993). This policy, in our view, is aimed at ensuring inclusivity and providing equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their ethnic background or socio-economic status. It is also similar to the American philosophy of education from 2002 to 2015, known as *No Child Left Behind*, which provided inclusive opportunities to students of different races (Behind, 2001).

After independence in 1990, two separate institutions of higher learning were founded, namely the University of Namibia (UNAM) and the Polytechnic of Namibia (PoN), which were the only two higher education institutions in the country. The University of Namibia, which is the focus of this study, was established through an Act of Parliament, Act 18 of 1992 (University of Namibia, 2011). The University of Namibia programmes are designed to meet the needs of the country in terms of human resources through high-quality teaching, research, consultancy and community services. These human resources must be competitive and productive and should lead both public and private institutions toward a knowledge-based economy, economic growth, and an improved quality of life. Higher education in Namibia, however, is still viewed as young and comparatively new (Matengu et al., 2014). Being a new university, UNAM strives to provide equitable and quality education, like any other university in the world, even during COVID-19 (University of Namibia, 2019-2024). This paper addressed the following objective:

1. To explore the practices of access, equity, dignity and social justice at the University of Namibia, after the COVID-19 crisis.
2. To examine accessibility in terms of the availability of ICT resources and infrastructure required for students to succeed in online learning.

Before the researchers present the study context, they define the operational key concepts in this paper.

Access: The researchers define access as anything being available to a student or group of students. Access can be evaluated from the economic and social contexts of a student, the effort and time required to obtain learning materials, and the ICT resources and infrastructure needed to get what is needed to accomplish the learning objective. In this paper, the researchers examined accessibility in terms of the availability of ICT resources and infrastructure required for students to succeed in online learning (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993).

Equity: Equity is seen as being reasonable and fair in such a way that every student, irrespective of social and economic status, is treated equally. In this paper, equity refers to the same treatment given to all students in the provision of online learning. However, this

paper acknowledges that equality does not always imply applying the same criteria to all students. The researchers can only discuss equality when they acknowledge that each student has unique learning needs based on challenges they may face during online learning. Thus, the researchers can conclude that higher education institutions can promote values of equity in the educational setting by introducing policies that aim to support students during any crisis that might require online learning, for instance, by providing devices to students. Equity is about fairness and fairness results in social justice (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993).

Quality: The concept of quality refers to how good or bad something is compared to set standards. It also varies depending on who defines the quality. It refers to standards and measures that are both means from and means to an end. In order to know and determine quality, one must not only be able to measure it according to a set of acceptable standards but also control and monitor those standards. Since the characteristics of things labelled as 'of quality' change, quality is also time-bound. As such, educational outputs that were considered of quality a decade ago may be perceived as unfashionable today. Thus, in this study, quality refers to the meaningfulness of standards and particular characteristics compared to set goals and national priorities within a defined period (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993).

Dignity: The Namibian Constitution defines dignity in the context of a person being a human being, who is worthy and deserves to be respected with honour (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 1990). In this paper, it is argued that students must be treated with respect and provided with facilities and infrastructure that facilitate the learning process even in times of a pandemic.

Social justice: Social justice is broadly perceived to relate to ideas of equity, fairness and inclusion. In order to succeed academically, students must have access to educational resources and opportunities for learning especially in times of crises (Hyttén & Bettez, 2011). In this study, social justice is therefore a vehicle to ensure equal provision of educational resources to all students irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds.

Contextualisation of the study

Before the COVID-19 crisis, UNAM mainly used a face-to-face teaching mode. At the time,

students could be taught together in one venue as there were no restrictions on physical contact. However, during the COVID-19 crisis, UNAM, like most of the institutions of higher learning around the world, had to re-think, re-imagine, re-innovate and re-design the provision of accessible, equitable and quality education. Thus, the University of Namibia adopted an online teaching and learning mode. Students interacted with their lecturers and other students through online platforms such as Moodle, Teams and WhatsApp.

Historically, UNAM has gone through three rigorous curriculum transformations, namely the trimester-semester, the three-year four-year and the four-year level 8 Honours composite degree transformation (University of Namibia, 2020). This series of transformations resulted in the expansion of the UNAM campuses, the broadening of its academic programmes, and increased enrolment. UNAM also started offering acclaimed academic programmes, such as medicine, law, accounting and engineering, which were not offered locally. The acclaimed academic programmes clearly form part of the transformation agenda and include specific critical competencies, such as problem-solving and critical thinking skills, ethical leadership and conduct, compassion, sustainable development skills and digital literacy, amongst others. These, in our view, are examples of initiatives aimed at addressing issues of equity, dignity and justice among the higher education fraternity in Namibia, by the University of Namibia. These curriculum transformations were responding mostly to the developmental objectives of the country and that of the world and are mostly necessitated by the forces of the 4th and 5th industrial revolutions (IRs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN) (University of Namibia, 2019-2024).

Theoretical and conceptual frameworks

The paper adopted collective theoretical and conceptual frameworks as promoted in the classical liberal theory of equal opportunities of Sherman and Wood (1982) and Singleton Systemic Equity (2015). The researchers recognise that there is no single framework or solution to build equitable and inclusive education systems, they believe that there is a need to understand how a collective approach could build a more inclusive, diverse equitable and just education system that meets the needs of all students (Tang & Estrada-Reveles,

2021), regardless of their ethnic background or socio-economic status. The following concepts are part of the adopted collective framework.

This paper is underpinned by the classical liberal theory of equal opportunities advocated by Sherman and Wood, who championed the need that all students receive equal opportunity in education (Tuffour et al., 2021). This theory holds the view that every student is born with an inherent capacity that cannot easily be changed. It is, therefore, expected that the education system is structured in a way that eliminates barriers or obstacles of any form that hinder the full participation of students from less privileged backgrounds, such as by preventing them from taking advantage of their inherent talents to achieve social advancement. According to the classical liberal theory, the equal opportunities provided by educational frameworks would encourage social mobility in any student. Based on this theory and the associated philosophical thoughts, education systems and structures should be planned on the understanding that they should remove impediments or obstructions of any form. The outbreak of pandemics, such as COVID-19 and related infectious ailments that led institutions of higher learning to implement unexpected, prolonged closures, generated a lot of problems for underprivileged and less fortunate students. With Namibia being documented as being an unequal society, the parents of students from affluent families could afford expensive digital gadgets, such as iPhones, for their children to continue learning from the comfort of their homes, while the opposite was not true for destitute students (Tuffour et al., 2021). The outbreak of COVID-19 revealed the true reality of Namibian society in relation to access to education and the right to human dignity. It is therefore nearly difficult to ignore the idea that uneven involvement in education will worsen the situation of disadvantaged and vulnerable students when it comes to access and equity issues (Njeru & Orodho, 2003, cited in Tuffour et al., 2021).

The classical liberal theory was deemed fit for this paper because the barriers imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic affected the more unfortunate, less privileged and susceptible parents and guardians; consequently, the effect trickled down to their children because they could not afford the basic necessities, both at home and at the university (Kadhila & Nyambe, 2021). The situation was worsened

by the digital divide since the well-to-do students were being taught through radio, Moodle, videos and YouTube, among other digital means. The less fortunate were struggling with unstable electricity and connectivity issues and hence did not have an equal opportunity to access education (Kadhila & Nyambe, 2021). This is directly in conflict with Article 20 of the Namibian Constitution (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 1990), which provides for the right to education by every child in the country. This suggests that the social justice and dignity of certain students were somewhat violated. Even though the UNAM tried to provide devices such as internet dongles to all students during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is still evident that learning opportunities for students living in remote areas were minimal. This confirms that the country has an unequal society in which well-to-do students will continue to have access to education.

The Singleton Systemic Equity Framework which describes equity as “a belief, a habit of mind that does not correspond to the beginning or end of the school day” (Singleton, 2015, p. 55), was further adopted in this paper. This framework posits that educational equity is achieved when the following objectives are attained: (1) there is an increase in the achievement of all students; (2) the gaps between the highest and lowest-performing students are narrowed; and (3) the likelihood and disproportionality of which students from less privileged backgrounds occupying the lowest achievement categories are minimised. Furthermore, Singleton (2015) argues that giving all students equal resources is insufficient and does not acknowledge that “the processes, structures and ideologies that justify inequity are not addressed and dismantled” (p. 56). In other words, equity means that students from less privileged communities should receive the greatest level of support to guarantee academic success because it is not about providing equality in resources, but it is about giving the neediest students what they need to succeed.

The collective theoretical and conceptual frameworks discussed above depict that access and equity can contribute to achieving quality education. Such education is inclusive and ensures that every student from less privileged communities has the optimum resources, skills, attitudes, values, and a conducive environment. Students need to be resourceful persons who

can navigate during and after periods of crises. Given the role each framework (Sherman & Wood, 1982; Singleton, 2015) plays in contributing to quality education, this paper assists us in understanding the disparities which emerged during the time of crisis and enables us to propose future pedagogical and epistemological approaches to improve access to equitable quality education.

Methodological considerations

This paper employed a desktop review as a research methodology to systematically review the secondary data on equity, dignity and justice in higher education with a focus on a public university in Namibia. Desktop review is a research process that comprises the systematic gathering, examination, and synthesis of existing literature from reports, publications, online databases, and other secondary sources (Davis & Green, 2021). It is a research process that involves summarising existing literature to gain a solid understanding of the research objectives. Hence, it helps identify important themes, trends, and gaps in the current knowledge base (Jones, 2023; Smith & Brown, 2022). In this paper, the researchers specifically reviewed secondary sources, such as government and university directives, policies and peer-reviewed journal articles, which deal directly with the provision of accessible, equitable and quality higher education during and after the COVID-19 crisis. The publications from 2019 to 2023 were retrieved from numerous databases such as EBSCO, JSTOR, SCOPUS and ERIC. The researchers used keywords such as equity, access, quality, dignity, justice and higher education. The researchers retrieved a total of 700 publications which were used for analysis. There were, however, a few related publications (2010 to 2018) that researchers looked at but did not fall between the specified periods (2019 to 2023). Data were thematically analysed, and the researchers were guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework for conducting a thematic analysis. For instance, the researchers familiarised ourselves with the data retrieved, and the retrieved data were coded, categorised and reviewed before being grouped into emergent themes. The review resulted in a thematic analysis of practices of equity, dignity and justice during and after the COVID-19 crisis under the umbrella of two broad themes, namely:

- *The COVID-19 pandemic: Navigating through a crisis, and*
- *After COVID-19: Future pedagogical and epistemological approaches.*

In the following sections, the researchers discuss these broad themes in detail.

The COVID-19 pandemic: Navigating through a crisis

In late December 2019, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak was reported in Wuhan City, China (Kaisara & Bwalya, 2020). COVID-19 spread across the globe in a short period, including to countries such as Thailand, the Republic of Korea, Japan, the United States, the Philippines and Vietnam, and then to other parts of the world including Namibia. This led the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on 30 January 2020 (World Health Organization, 2020). Like everywhere else in the world, the Namibian government also declared a State of Emergency on 17 March 2020. This introduced strict measures such as the closure of all borders, schools and institutions of higher learning, and the suspension of public gatherings and all economic activities (United Nations, 2020). For the government to prevent the transmission of the virus, the country went into a full lockdown on 28 March 2020 (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2020). Measures were put in place, such as enforced social distancing, self-isolation, quarantine, working from home, wearing masks in public places, and temporary places of worship and educational institutions (Di Gennaro et al., 2020). Globally, the COVID-19 situation disrupted schools and institutions of higher learning, and many learning institutions were closed because of the pandemic (UNESCO, 2021). According to UNESCO (2021), the closure of institutions of higher learning and other educational institutions was enforced because large gatherings constituted a serious risk to public health during the pandemic.

During this closure, institutions of higher learning shifted from face-to-face to an online teaching and learning mode. With many resources constrained, African countries, including Namibia, were struggling with limited infrastructure that could not accommodate all prospective higher education students (Lwoga, 2012). This situation led to some students missing out on education, which further amplified the inequalities inherent in

many education systems, including that of Namibia (Adebayo et al., 2020). Most of the students, especially those from rural areas and disadvantaged backgrounds/communities were affected greatly by the shift from face-to-face to online teaching and learning. Although the UNAM tried to provide students with devices, not all students were able to make use of them due to lack of electricity and poor internet connectivity, a situation that is more prevalent in the remote and rural areas of Namibia. As a result, students were not able to engage in lecturer-student discussion forums on Moodle, which was adopted by the UNAM as the official learning management system (LMS) for teaching and learning. This generally meant that students were not able to complete their assessment tasks on time. As highlighted in the preceding discussions, universities and other higher education institutions continued to provide online instruction and learning as an alternative to in-person instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic (Munna & Shaikh, 2020). As a result, online pedagogy became increasingly relevant. In light of this, UNAM encouraged the global use of technology-enhanced learning to increase equity, boost productivity, and raise the standard of teaching and learning.

Online pedagogy consists of the methods, techniques and strategies utilised to deliver content online (Archambault et al., 2022). Moodle, Microsoft Teams and Zoom were used the most in most institutions of higher learning. Universities mainly used these applications because they helped them communicate more effectively with students during the pandemic (Alakrash & Razak, 2022). However, many higher education institutions worldwide were faced with challenges of minimal online teaching experience, prior preparation, and support for educational technology (Bao, 2020). Ensuring proper utilisation of virtual learning environments, such as Moodle, Blackboard, and Canvas, along with live virtual lecture-delivery software like Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Cisco WebEx, posed a big challenge (Munna & Shaikh, 2020). At UNAM, internet connectivity remained a challenge for most students during the lockdown, particularly those who migrated back to rural and remote areas (Kadhila & Nyambe, 2021). One of the numerous difficulties faced by lecturers when teaching online was a lack of computer literacy. Few lecturers have had official

training in information technology and computer usage, let alone online teaching (Amoako et al., 2022). These enormous problems made online instruction more difficult. Online teaching necessitates the creation and application of more inclusive techniques that consider various learning styles in addition to technological constraints (Sithole et al., 2019). To keep students engaged and informed while teaching online, lecturers must use a range of techniques (Sithole et al., 2019).

Given the fact that the online teaching and learning mode is a relatively new concept for both experienced and novice educators, professional development is necessary, which may include effective course design, instruction, implementation and evaluation (Mbongo et al., 2021). When compared to industrialised countries, developing countries have less access to the internet, making the problem even worse (Mathrani et al., 2022). A study done at a Botswana University found unreliable internet access as a main obstacle to online teaching and learning (Mathew & Iloanya, 2016). Similarly, Dube (2020) discusses how the unavailability of internet connectivity hampered online teaching and learning in some rural areas in South Africa. Due to connectivity issues, lecturers in Namibia also communicated with students through SMS and WhatsApp platforms to ensure that quality, equity and justice in teaching prevailed during the COVID-19 pandemic (Nuuyoma et al., 2020). However, due to inequality in internet access, injustice is inevitable for students from less-privileged settings. In a study conducted in Brazil, Dias et al. (2022) concluded that since students with good internet access experienced less suffering than those with poor internet access, the dignity of destitute students was compromised.

After COVID-19: Future pedagogical and epistemological approaches

University of Namibia recognised the aftermath of COVID-19 and acknowledged the forces of the 4th and 5th industrial revolutions (IRs). University of Namibia (2020) admits that “the new IRs are bringing radical, disruptive change to higher education. COVID-19 has taught us hard lessons, 4IR and 5IR technologies may offer effective ways to deal with and cope with complex and ever-changing worlds as well as global threats. Our curricula should include highly potent digital tools, skills and competencies such as research

and innovation, and adaptation which harness our graduates' capabilities to be able to create solutions to current and future global threats” (p, 5).

Although COVID-19 has disrupted teaching and learning at institutions of higher learning, it has forced universities, such as UNAM, to rethink and redesign their teaching and learning strategies to ensure equitable, accessible and quality education for all. Blended learning has now become the new normal and pedagogy in which a combination of face-to-face and online teaching and learning approaches are utilised. From an educational perspective, blended learning refers to courses that are taught by integrating two separate paradigms: classroom-synchronous and online-asynchronous learning (Chowdhury, 2020). Chowdhury (2020) emphasises that in a blended learning environment, teachers integrate online with traditional face-to-face activities in a planned, systematic manner that adds value to the overall learning process. For example, theoretical components may be offered online with students on campus, while practical subjects such as sciences, technology and mathematics may be offered face-to-face. The aims of blended learning include providing different modes of content delivery to encourage student interaction, promote the acquisition of knowledge and skills through physical classrooms, and continue the learning processes electronically (Hadiyanto et al., 2021). This paradigm shift demonstrates the commitment of higher education institutions, including UNAM, to using technology to facilitate flexible, adaptive learning environments and to empower students with hands-on digital literacy, which is a key element of the actualisation of SDGs (Dhawan, 2020). Digitalisation in higher education allows lectures to be streamed online and for lecturers and students to interact in virtual environments; however, not everyone is ready for this (Strielkowski, 2022).

After the COVID-19 crisis, the pedagogical and epistemological approaches to learning and teaching at UNAM shifted toward social constructivism (University of Namibia, 2020). Thus, UNAM intensified the use of blended learning through a learning management system (LMS). An LMS offers “user-friendly platforms that save instructors' time by sparing them from the task of learning programming languages and setting up the

programs” (Yu et al., 2010, p. 333). An LMS ensures the use of both traditional teaching techniques and digital learning resources and, at the same time, offers students individualised e-learning opportunities (Aljawarneh, 2020). At UNAM, Moodle is the official learning management system (LMS). It is well documented that Moodle, which is open-source software and amongst the top 20 best LMSs, is popular and has a high rate of acceptance in a number of institutions of higher learning (Altinpulluk & Kesim, 2021; Henrick, 2018; Sergis & Sampson, 2017), including the UNAM. Moodle has several features that are commonly used at the UNAM, such as Video, Discussion Forums, Chat, Materials and Quiz. With Moodle, students can have discussions with lecturers and other students on forums. In addition, lecturers can upload material/notes and videos for students, interact with students through Chat, and assess students through different types of quizzes. Moodle, which allows for blended learning, means that lecturers do not need to physically meet the students in the classroom. Thus, the Moodle platform made teaching and learning flexible for both lecturers and students.

The shift in teaching and learning pedagogies, as discussed above, has drawn the attention of the world to skills that are in high demand, such as innovation, teamwork, digital literacy skills, learning and innovation skills, socio-emotional skills and flexibility in the face of uncertain and complicated problems (Ata, et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2019; Yasuv et al., 2020). The blended teaching and learning approach adopted by UNAM requires that lecturers and students possess 21st century skills in order to function effectively and build resilient mechanisms for a sustainable future. These skills comprise a set of 12 competencies that students and lecturers today need to master for their future careers (Ata et al., 2021; Ratten, 2023). These skills include creativity, collaboration, communication, information literacy, media literacy, technology literacy, flexibility, leadership, initiative, productivity and social skills. It has become necessary for people to learn new skills in order to adjust to changes in today's world, and education is not an exception in this regard (Mulenga & Marbán, 2020). However, Ratten (2023) and Sulaiman and Ismail (2020) argue that the demand for these skills makes teaching in the 21st century a challenge for many academics, as they are now required to use the relevant

skills to engage students in the learning content by using digital resources and innovative tools. In an effort to ensure that lecturers and students thrive in the 21st century, UNAM, through the transformation of its curriculum, incorporated core modules such as Digital literacy, Education for Sustainable Development, Sustainability and Environmental Awareness, Ethics and Morality and a Skills Portfolio that are offered to all first-year students (University of Namibia, 2020). These modules are taught with the intention of developing students' creative and critical thinking, ethical and moral leadership, compassion and decisiveness, adaptability and flexibility, environmental awareness and social responsibility, technological and digital literacy, and global citizenry based on an international perspective and resilience (University of Namibia, 2020). Despite the efforts to virtually upskill lecturers and raise students' digital competence by integrating digital skills across subject curricula, Sulaiman and Ismail (2020) maintain that digital skills remain a top priority to ensure no one is left behind in the transition towards a digital economy. However, considering the fact that roughly half of the world still lacks access to a computer or the internet, the 'digital gap' presents a significant barrier to the teaching and learning of digital skills and contributes to growing inequalities in learning opportunities and outcomes (Sanders & Scanlon, 2021). While radio- and television-based learning in underdeveloped nations offers short-term solutions, Yasuv et al., (2020) emphasise that students in the most vulnerable environments are required to be resilient, inventive and flexible to overcome obstacles and maximise progress in the 21st century.

The discussion above resonates with the Classical Liberal Theory and Systematic Equity frameworks as they stress the importance of providing access to equitable quality education to all students irrespective of their backgrounds and localities. Despite limited resources in institutions of higher learning, the provision of education was evident through online platforms though it did not adequately and equitably benefit every student, especially those in remote areas. The frameworks acknowledged the present structure of unequal society which is a barrier to access equitable quality education for all students. These are impediments to achieving

social justice and human dignity of students, which in times of crises are not often complied with. Therefore, institutions of higher learning, in times of pandemics such as COVID-19, should provide equal learning opportunities in terms of pedagogical and epistemological approaches to all students. In summary, it appears that the future pedagogies and epistemological approaches will be inspired by blended learning, digitalisation, forces of the 4th and 5th IRs and equity, dignity, and justice.

Conclusion

Following the COVID-19 pandemic and the pressure from the 4th and 5th IRs, the education landscape in higher institutions of learning had to change rapidly. The outbreak of COVID-19 specifically forced institutions of higher learning to rethink and subsequently redesign their teaching and learning approaches to ensure equity, inclusivity and accessibility for all as enshrined in the universal principle of the right to education. COVID-19 has brought features of inequality in our institutions of higher learning to the surface. Generally, it could be observed clearly that disadvantaged and vulnerable members of society and people living in remote areas in Namibia were unable to access education fully. In order to ensure readiness for future crises, institutions of higher learning, including the UNAM, need to continue to create resilient environments that enable blended learning while taking cognisance of poorer socio-economic groups within society. Hence, integrating blended learning into the offering of the UNAM is of critical importance as it has the potential to provide both face-to-face and online learning opportunities for all. By doing this, UNAM will contribute to the fulfilment of the overall vision of the government as postulated in the *Education for All* policy, namely access, equity, democracy, quality and efficiency.

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