

# Instructors' Conceptions of Online Teaching and their Implications for Students' Learning at the Open University of Tanzania

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## Abstract

*This paper explores instructors' conceptions of online teaching and their implications for students' learning at the Open University of Tanzania. The study employed phenomenology research design with a total of 20 participants. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews and documentary review. The study findings revealed two major conceptions, namely online teaching as a means of improving teaching and learning and online teaching as not effective as traditional classroom teaching or traditional distance education. It was also revealed that online teaching is faced with unreliable electricity and Internet, high costs of bandwidth, cheating and plagiarism, inadequate training of instructors, and students' low attendance in zoom sessions. The study recommends for enabling Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) environment that supports online teaching, motivation of instructors and training instructors on how to teach in an online environment so as to allow instructors improve skills and knowledge.*

**Keywords:** *open and distance learning, online teaching, students' learning, Open University of Tanzania*

## Introduction

In recent years, online teaching has become an indispensable mode of teaching in higher learning institutions both in conventional and distance learning institutions (Pei & Wu, 2019). Many colleges and universities worldwide adopt and use online instructions for enhancing traditional face-to-face delivery so as to give learners access to a wide range of learning materials electronically (Bervell & Umar, 2018). Other universities use online instructions to complement distance education offered by many open universities to reach more learners across different countries (Mtebe, 2015). The demand for online courses is derived from a push to provide quality education to all students regardless of location and time (Chaney, 2010). The need for flexible learning environments

for potential learners who are unable to attend the traditional classrooms such as those who live in remote areas, those who are in full time jobs and those who want to learn independently (Khurshid, 2020). According to Palvia et al. (2018) the accessibility of the internet, confluence of new technologies, flexibility of online courses and demand for a workforce trained periodically for the ever evolving digital economy have made online education an integral part of higher education.

As majority of higher education institutions consider online education as part of their strategic growth to maximize learning opportunities and reach more students (Allen & Seaman 2015), the transition from traditional distance education to a virtual environment necessitates new ways of teaching (Redmond, 2011). Thus, instructors are obliged to change their pedagogical approach from teaching face-to-face or traditional distance education to online teaching. This requires their readiness and ability to teach in an online environment. Online teaching uses the internet to provide instructional materials and facilitate interactions between instructors and students and in some cases among students as well. Online teaching can be fully online, with all instruction taking place through the internet, or online elements can be combined with face-to-face interactions in what is known as blended learning (Horn & Staker 2011).

Online teaching can be provided through asynchronous or synchronous mode (Parveen, 2016). Asynchronous mode provides students with readily available materials in the form of audio or video lectures, handouts, articles and PowerPoint presentations via Learning Management System (LMS) such as Blackboard, Moodle, WebCT and Desire2Learn and involve tools such as e-mail, threaded discussion, news groups, bulletin boards and file attachment (Ní Shé et al, 2019). On the Other hand, teaching in a synchronous environment takes place live via an electronic mode, voice or text chat rooms and it provides an opportunity of teacher-student and student-student interaction in real time. Synchronous communication technology includes Google meet, Skype, Adobe Connect, Microsoft teams, Cisco Webex and Zoom (Wang & Houdyshell, 2021). It involves tools such as live chart, audio and video conferencing, data and application sharing, shared whiteboard, virtual hand rising, joint view of multimedia presentations and online slide shows to approximate face-to-face teaching strategies such as delivering lectures and holding meetings with groups of students (Parveen, 2016).

However, online teaching has been criticized for its apparent lack of quality control, unreliable internet connection, high costs associated with bandwidth, instructors' low skills of teaching online and unreliable electricity supply (Gillett-Swan, 2017). Regardless of these concerns, online education has made great

strides in recent years. More institutions of higher learning have introduced or reinforced their online education platforms, the main considerations being cost reduction for students and recruitment expansion in face of rising competition (Pedro & Kumar, 2020). However, instructors' resistance to change has been cited as a personal factor that impinges online learning adoption (Jeffrey et al., 2014; Kisanga & Ireson, 2015; Kisanjara et al., 2019; Shreaves et al., 2020). According to Jeffrey et al. (2014) instructors are much less positive than their students about the learning benefits of an online learning component. Gururaja (2021) added that most of instructors are not favourable towards online teaching.

In Tanzania, the Open University of Tanzania (OUT) in 2016/2017 academic year declared all undergraduate degree programmes to be taught through e-learning mode, except for some programmes such as Bachelor of Science in Information and Communications Technology (B.Sc. [ICT]), which are also being enhanced through various means such as short face-to-face sessions to complement e-learning. The reasons for this declaration were associated with improving quality of teaching and learning to instructors and students respectively, increasing enrolment and active number of students per year, increasing supervised self-learning on part of students and improving the quality of graduates and reducing the cost of academic delivery (OUT, 2016). Instructors use Moodle to facilitate course delivery using LMS tools such as discussion forums, assignment, chat forums and online lecture through zoom (OUT, 2021a). Despite all such efforts, instructors are reluctant to teach through online mode (OUT, 2018). Also, since when all courses for undergraduate programmes began being offered through the online mode, students' enrolment and active number of students have been decreasing. For example, students' enrolment for undergraduate programmes has decreased from 5008 in 2016/2017 to 3778 in 2020/2021 academic year (OUT, 2021b). Against this background, the present study focused on understanding instructors' conceptions of online teaching and their implications for students learning at the Open University of Tanzania.

## **Methodology**

This study employed interpretive phenomenology design to explore instructors' conceptions of online teaching at the Open University of Tanzania. Rationale for the use of interpretive phenomenology was justified by the need to generate interpretations that instructors' hold regarding online teaching experiences. Interpretive phenomenology is suitable for understanding the context of the 'lived experiences' of research participants and the meanings carried by their experiences (Alase, 2017).

The Open University of Tanzania is the only university that delivers its undergraduate degree programmes through e-learning since 2016/2017 academic year, except for some programmes such as B.Sc. (ICT), which are also being enhanced through various means such as short face-to-face sessions to complement e-learning (OUT, 2021a). Secondly, it is the only university established in the country to offer certificate, diploma, degree and postgraduate courses through open and distance learning mode.

Instructors (academic staff) were the target population of this study. Snowball sampling technique was used to select 20 instructors from OUT headquarters, Kinondoni and Rukwa regional centres who have rich information about online teaching. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from all 20 instructors and each interview session lasted for 30 to 60 minutes. Documentary review was used to collect data for triangulation purposes and included Moodle status, orientation speeches, rolling strategic plan and zoom timetables. The use of multiple data collection strategies targeted at ensuring credibility, transferability, and dependability of the study. The study also, considered participants' consent and willingness to be involved in the study. Respect of anonymity and confidentiality of participants were ensured through the use of numbers and letters were used for names of regional centres and the headquarters.

This study employed Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis (IPA). IPA gives researchers the best opportunity to understand the innermost deliberation of the 'lived experiences' of research participants. As an approach that is 'participant oriented', interpretative phenomenological analysis allows the interviewees to express themselves and their lived experience stories the way they see fit without any prosecution (Alase, 2017). The researcher used six steps for data analysis as proposed by Creswell (2013) and Moustakas (1994).

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **Instructors' Conceptions of Online Teaching**

In determining instructors' conceptions of online teaching and their implications for students learning, instructors were asked how they conceptualise online teaching. Data were obtained through interviews and documentary review and two major themes were generated: Online teaching as a means of improving teaching and learning and online teaching as not effective as traditional classroom training or traditional distance learning.

### ***Online teaching as a means of improving teaching and learning***

Most of instructors conceptualised online teaching as a means of improving teaching and learning whose emphasis is on its ability to offer real-time online lecture, individual access to materials and information, individual assessment, a medium of engaging online discussion, learner centred when using asynchronous online classroom and access to recorded lecture.

### ***Online teaching as an opportunity for real time online lecture***

Online lecture is being conducted through real time (live) online lectures. The Open University of Tanzania offers real time online lectures just as in any conventional university for all courses using video conference based on Zoom cloud meeting application. Students are encouraged to observe a teaching timetable provided and join the online classes where they have opportunity to interact with lecturers and fellow students. The lectures starts at 14:30HRS to 19:15HRS (all times are +3 UTC). The zoom joining links are accessed on their Moodle account. There is one hour lecture for each knowledge area (KI-K6) every month from December to May each year. But there is another timetable for April intake that starts from April to September. Normally each knowledge area comprises more than two topics of the course syllabus. Instructors expressed that real-time online lectures are flexible and convenient as they allow them to teach wherever they are; whether at the workplace, at home or in a hotel. Online teaching provides an opportunity to meet students from different parts of the world; many of the instructors' value this ubiquitous environment. An instructor from regional centre A exposed:

I teach through zoom where I have an opportunity to provide lecture to my students by sharing slides on the screen where students have an opportunity to take notes, can ask questions and can chat on the web page. It is like traditional classroom training but it is done with the aid of Internet. Students from different countries like Ghana, Senegal and Namibia have been able to participate virtually. I enjoy teaching through online mode, I can travel and still run a session wherever I'm, I can be at home but run the session. This can be done also at any time when uploading study materials and replying to students web mail. Thus, I can be a father, husband, student, lecturer at the same time teaching.

From the quotation above, online teaching is conducted at OUT through synchronous mode where zoom is employed as an approach for facilitating lessons in real time. Using synchronous learning environment includes real-time sharing of knowledge and learning and immediate access to the instructor to

ask questions and receive answers. Teaching through zoom minimize students' isolation and provide an opportunity for students to attend the classroom from any place, instructors can conduct sessions from any place. Due to flexibility and convenience, online teaching can be used during natural calamities such as floods, earthquakes, and diseases as it was the case with COVID-19. These findings concur with those of Amiti (2020) who reported that in online teaching environment, the teacher and the student meet online on a specific online platform for teaching and communicate about lessons live. Perveen (2016) maintained that direct interaction with teachers and students in real time is very much like a traditional face-to-face classroom, as distance is no more a barrier and by connectivity via the internet no time is wasted in traveling. Instant feedback and answers can help students resolve any problems they encounter in learning. Facial expressions and tones of voice can aid them to have the human feel at a broader spectrum and lead to global interaction without much cost. However, this type of environment requires a set date and time for meeting and this contradicts the promise of *anytime, anywhere* learning that traditional distance education promoted. Some of the challenges of real – time online lectures can be the need for the availability of students at a given time and the necessary availability of a good bandwidth and internet. Participants can feel frustrated and thwarted due to technical problems. Also the challenge of timetable that is scheduled intervene the principle of flexibility in ODL in which it enforces all instructors and students to be present during live session. Thus, teaching an online live session is flexible in terms of place but not time.

### ***Online teaching as a means for individual access to materials and information***

The majority of instructors conceptualise online teaching as a means of improving teaching and learning through enhancing accessibility of materials and information in Moodle. Instructors develop materials and upload them in Moodle which is accessed by students at anytime and anyplace. Also, instructors post various information on Moodle regarding assignment, quizzes, discussion forum, timetable for zoom lecturing and calendar, Also, in online teaching instructors record lectures and upload them in Moodle. The fact that online teaching helps to simplify accessibility of materials and information but learners must pay first instalment of tuition fees with all its direct costs in order to access the materials and other information in Moodle. This affects the implementation of online teaching because all students who have not paid tuition fees cannot start learning and access information. The following instructor from Regional Centre C explained:

Online teaching is like face-to-face teaching but the difference is that it is done with the aid of internet and there is improvement of teaching if compared to traditional distance education in which

materials are developed and distributed to learners via regional centres where it takes long time to reach students. With online teaching a student can access materials in Moodle at any time from any place. With online teaching I upload materials in terms of lecture notes, PPTs, reference books and course outline as well as course information.

The findings in the illustration above prove that Moodle as a Learning Management System (LMS) has improved students' access to materials. Students can easily download materials, save in their devices and read during their convenient time. This helps students to read the materials at any place and anytime. Students can access the materials from their devices such as smartphone, ipad and computer whether at workplace, home or even when travelling. Moodle helps students to view information in the webpage regarding assignments, quizzes, discussion forum, timetable for zoom lecturing and calendar. It also provides access to zoom link information, Gonzalez (2010) proposed that instructors conceptualise online teaching by focussing on the provision of information which included two conceptions of eLearning (as a medium to provide information and as a medium for occasional communication. Students needs to visits their Moodle frequently to access information and instructors should make clarifications and provide information through Moodle as well.

According to Manea et al. (2021) online teaching through Moodle helps instructors to create and save teaching materials easily and it is a collaborative online platform for instructors and students to learn together. Moreover, it enhances better and easier access to the educational materials on the platform. This study found that there were 1585 courses uploaded in the Moodle. Courses uploaded with 100 % were 693 (44%), courses above 50% were 509 (32 %), courses below 50% were 288 (18%) and courses with 0% were 95 (6%). This finding implies that only 44% of courses were uploaded in the Moodle with all important information, and 95 courses equivalent to 6% is zero had no materials found even course outline. Students needs to visits their Moodle frequently to access information and instructors should make clarifications and provide information through Moodle.

### ***Online teaching as a means for individual assessment***

Most of interviewees reported that online teaching is conceptualised as a means of improving teaching and learning through online assignments, Tutor Marked Assignments (TAM) and Computer Marked Assignments (CMA). Online assessment as any kind of assessment is used primarily to measure cognitive abilities, demonstrating what has been learned after a particular educational event has occurred such as the end of an instructional unit or chapter. At the

moment, at the Open University of Tanzania, online assignments are used for formative assessment to determine if learning is happening, and the extent to which it is happening. Ongoing feedback needs to be given as soon as possible after the task is completed for improvement of teaching and learning for teachers and students respectively. Course instructors prepare online assignments for each knowledge area that is marked either online on the Moodle or offline by the instructor.

In TMA, a student attempts two essay questions whereby each question carries 15 per cent making a total of 30 per cent. However, instructors disclosed their experience that when teaching through tutor-marked assignment where an instructor needs to grade and put comments, they realized that cheating through copying others' works and plagiarism were the major problems reported by all instructors. As such, instructors preferred pencil and paper tests. One instructor from Regional Centre B revealed:

We teach through online assignments in order to motivate students to read and consult various literatures but unfortunately students are just copying materials from the internet without paraphrasing or citing the sources. Three students uploaded work with the same content, I decided to mark only one work and I did not submit marks to the Head of the Department.... I was waiting for them to ask for the missing marks so that I could ask them who is the owner of the work but nobody has come since then up to now (almost one year now and there are no grades in their SARIS accounts.

Overall, TMA helped to improve students' learning because with assignments students are motivated to read various literatures and improve their academic writing skills. Students can do assignments from any place and at any time but the issue of cheating and plagiarism was a major challenge reported by all instructors. Instructors disliked the use of online assignments and preferred pencil and paper tests. This finding do not concur with Balen (2015) who conducted a research on online formative assessment in higher education in South Africa and found that instructors' perceptions' were that online assessment is better than pencil and paper assessment. One possible explanation for this positive perception is the availability of good ICT infrastructure in the study area and instructors' acceptance of online teaching increases as they start teaching and become familiar with the system.

Also this study found that at OUT, instructors teach through Computer-Marked Assignments (CMA) called quiz. Quiz was also reported by instructors that staff from Faculty of Business Management used both TMA and CMA to

assess their students and two staff from Faculty of Education used CMA only to assess their students and one instructor from Faculty of Science Technology and Environmental Studies (FSTEs) said that he used CMA to assess students. CMAs consist of objective type questions such as Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ), True/False Questions (TFQ) and Short Answer Questions (SAQ). The Directorate of Examinations Syndicate (DES) provides the power to the department for deciding the modality of assessing students using CMA or TMA. Three instructors preferred using quiz because it is easy in marking for a class with large number of students. Online marking of students' assignments needs more time and thus instructors with large number of students do not prefer using TMA, but rather they prefer using CMA which is automatically marked by computer. Although online formative assessment can help all students, it produces predominantly good results with low achievers by focusing on specific glitches with their work and providing them with a clear comprehension of the mistakes and how to correct them (Balen, 2015). The take away from this finding is that OUT students should continue doing online assignments but they should be taught about the consequences of cheating and how to avoid plagiarism. Similarly, submission of assignments should accompany with plagiarism test. Further, student who cannot do online assignment due to various factors should sit for pencil and pen paper.

### ***Online teaching as a medium of engaging online discussion***

Online discussion is a collaborative tool to facilitate communication and knowledge construction. Students can view content and contribute to an online discussion any time or anywhere on their device with Internet connection or offline using OUT mobile App. Lecturers award marks depending on participation of each individual, the marks awarded are needed for official use including being a component in students' continuous assessment and hence determination of final grade for some courses or programmes. Instructors reported that with the presence of online discussion, teaching is improved since students have an opportunity to contribute and read comments from their fellow students as reported by the instructor from Regional Centre B:

Online discussion provides an opportunity for students to share their views on the topic by providing what they understand and sometimes discussion become very hot and it can be done live through WhatsApp subject group, subject telegram groups and in Moodle where we can have a topic and each student contributes at his/her convenient time. I use online discussion Moodle very rarely as I can remember I used it during introducing the course and very few students participated. Moreover, because

there are no marks attached to online discussion, students do not feel the necessity of participating in it.

From the voice above, online discussion helps students to share ideas but it is rarely used at the Open University of Tanzania and students are not given the opportunity in Moodle to initiate the discussion except in WhatsApp groups. This finding implies that although OUT use online discussion for teaching, but it is rarely used among instructors and students. Cheung et al. (2008) found that in peer-led discussions, eighty percent of the students feel more motivated when the forum owner acknowledges their posting. This tendency motivates students to post even more in the thread. Woods and Bliss (2016) found that many students feel discouraged after finding that their colleagues have already posted ideas similar to what they wanted to post. Under such circumstances, it could be helpful for instructors to employ a feature of the course management system in which the students cannot see each other's posts before they answer the initial discussion question. However, this study found that students may see what others have posted and think differently or even support, critique or comment anything about it. Additionally, OUT may consider assigning marks for student participation in online discussions.

### ***Online teaching is not as effective as traditional classroom teaching or traditional distance education***

Instructors reported that despite understanding the importance of online teaching that it improves teaching and learning, they see it as not effective as traditional classroom training or traditional distance education because it suffers from many challenges. Instructors are hesitant to believe if online programmes can produce graduates of a quality comparable to those from the conventional mode of delivery.

### ***Dispositional factors***

The findings indicated that the way instructors conceptualise online teaching is based on their dispositional factors in relation to online teaching. Instructors' belief of what online teaching meant was a base for their conceptions of online teaching as a means of improving teaching and learning or online teaching as not effective as traditional classroom training or traditional distance education. This was reported by one of the instructor from Regional Centre B that:

With online teaching, I don't believe if online students can perform as well as students from conventional institutions who participate in seminars, attend live lectures and do their examinations. OUT students are also required to have face –

to-face sessions instead of relying on zoom and Moodle only. In zoom sessions, very few students attend. For example, in my course I have more than 300 students but zoom attendance is usually less than 40 students.

The implication of the above voice is that instructors possess negative conception of online teaching as a means of enhancing students' learning. Instructors are not comfortable with the modality of teaching and they prefer face-to – face teaching. . Also, instructors miss various benefits as there is no longer transfer allowance which was a compensation for face-to – face sessions which are replaced by zoom sessions; test which were conducted in January every year are currently replaced by assignments and quizzes. Thus, no allowances for invigilation and panel marking which was done in March each year at the headquarters in Dar es Salaam; no allowances for transporting examinations for drivers and some instructors who used to transport examinations because this task is done through email.

Extant research has shown mixed results with these comparisons. For instance, Layne et al. (2015), Perrotta and Bohan (2020), Sthapita and Shrestha (2020), and Philip and Cain (2015) have determined that online courses are as effective as their face-to-face counterparts. For example, Sthapita and Shrestha (2020) found that students' experience with the online classes in terms of comparative knowledge gained is equivalent to that with the face-to-face classes (with the aggregate mean values figuring 3.45 out of five). On the contrary, Liu et al, (2020), Makina and Madiope(2016) and Johnson et al. (2008) have found that online courses produce significantly lower learning outcomes and are an inadequate educational option. Further, Elida et al. (2012) found that students who joined conventional class got better scores in Cultural and Social Study than those who took the two subjects in virtual class. Additionally, Horspool and Yang (2010) reported that students perceived gaining greater knowledge from face-to-face courses than from online courses. Stevens et al. (2021) surveyed 91 studies from these a total of 37 studies (41%) found online teaching was associated with better student learning outcomes, 17 studies (18%) reported better outcomes with face-to-face mode and 37studies (41%) found no significant differences. Gururaja (2021) found that most of teachers are not favourable towards online teaching. The causes behind such a phenomenon are that school teachers are not competent in e-learning skills; lack of previous knowledge about online teaching and; most of them are not very much comfortable with ICT related activities.

### ***Instructors' background***

The findings revealed that instructors tend to teach based on their experience as students at various levels of education which they happened to pass through. They associated the current conceptions of online teaching with the way they were taught by then. The findings indicated that all instructors were not taught how to teach through online mode when they were studying at universities or colleges. Thus, instructors' past experiences was also a factor for their conceptualisation of online teaching. An instructor from Regional Centre B remarked:

I remember when I was pursuing my first degree some of my lecturers were good indeed. They lectured by using vivid examples and we also had tutorial assistants who were supervising the seminar presentations. We have had active discussions, debates, clarifications and this justifies that teaching and learning was taking place and we enjoyed the process. But now, teaching through online mode deprives students and instructors most such traditional opportunities.

By and large, the way people were taught had significant contribution to the way they were teaching and conceptualising online teaching. This also implies that people are teaching by reflecting on how they were taught without knowing that methods of teaching are dynamic as they evolve time to time due to technological advancements which come with new strategies in teaching. As such instructors ought to attend various capacity building programmes in order to get acquainted with the contemporary teaching approaches.

Schmidt et al. (2016) highlight that since college instructors often teach as they were taught, they may lack an example of what effective online teaching entails, especially if they never took an online course themselves as students. For instance, instructors may be required to switch from teacher-centred lectures that tend to dominate face-to-face teaching. Examples of the shift from lectures to student-centered instructional methods include interactive and engaged lesson implementation via discussion board assignments, digital simulations and other instructional tools, and synchronous or asynchronous webinars. Additionally, Pomerantz and Brooks (2017) found that majority of instructors who did not teach online strongly disagreed with the claim that online learning helps students learn more effectively. However, sharing expert instructors' experiences with other instructor help to dispel some of instructors' hesitations about teaching online and encourage them to be more accepting of online learning

### ***Challenges of ICT facilities and other support services***

The findings also indicated that online teaching is not as effective as traditional classroom training due to several challenges associated with facilities facing both instructors and students during the process. Instructors mentioned technological challenges, unreliable internet accessibility and unreliable electricity. This was reported by one instructor from Regional Centre A as follows:

The way I see online teaching is not effective if compared to traditional classroom training, because traditional classroom training requires the presence of a classroom with its facilities such as chairs, tables, projector, students and lecturers. Student can study even with the absence of electricity and Internet but with online teaching absence of Internet and electricity means there will be no class session. I don't see if the University is in the right truck, the way staffs are struggling to teach online and the way students are also struggling to learn through the online mode.

From the illustration above, online teaching depends on availability of ICT facilities in order to be conducted and this hinders effective implementation of teaching which do not happen in traditional distance education or traditional classroom training. Challenges of ICT facilities such as hearing problems, challenges of teaching and learning devices, Internet, unreliability of electricity, bandwidth costs and deficiencies in support services have a bearing on developing instructors' conceptions of online. Kisanga (2016) suggests that the presence of external variables such as poor ICT infrastructure and support on system use had a significant influence on teachers' attitudes towards technology. This is also in line with Mardiana (2020) who found that most instructors stated that the problem is the campus infrastructure that must accommodate access to learning so that the benefits that have been used by instructors in teaching can be the progress of the campus and students. Similarly, Mtebe et al. (2021) note that the availability of reliable and speedy internet connectivity is mandatory for the introduction of technology-enhanced learning. Instructors who face ICT challenges when teaching through online mode develop negative conceptions of online teaching in enhancing students' learning.

### ***Cheating and plagiarism***

Cheating and plagiarism were viewed by instructors as a challenge of implementing online teaching, they said that cheating and plagiarism discourage critical thinking, undermine the intended purpose of assigned work, prevent intellectual growth, violate professional ethics and render instructors' assessments of students work meaningless. They further reported that cheating and plagiarism

exist in online assignments, quizzes and oral examinations. One of the instructors from Regional Centre B reported:

The serious challenge I am experiencing with online teaching is plagiarism where students are just copying materials from the Internet without either citing or paraphrasing. Should these students' assignments be tested on the Turnitin software almost all students would fail and be discontinued. Under such circumstances, I would rather suggest students to sit for a pen and paper test. For example, we are not even sure whether assignments are done by genuine students.

It is stated in OUT prospectus 2021/2022 that any plagiarism that exceeds 30% of the total volume of the work will be rejected outright (OUT, 2021a). The findings in this study indicate that students' online submissions are not subjected to plagiarism test and undergraduate students do not attach it. Nwosu and Chukuere (2020) indicate that student cheating is more widely spread across online learning than it is the case with offline mode of learning. This is a massive problem among universities, colleges and even secondary schools in South Africa. This finding is contrary to Adzima (2020) who reported that, instructors with online teaching experience do not believe that cheating is more prevalent in the online than offline environment. The differences among literatures are because instructors with more experiences of online teaching develop positive attitude towards online teaching than those with less experiences.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on the findings, and considering the ever evolving technology, growing demand of higher education coupled with the inability of conventional institutional to cope with such a great demand of higher education, it becomes natural to conclude that online teaching should not be taken as an option but as part and parcel of any teaching and learning mode.

This paper has noted that instructors have mixed feelings regarding online teaching as a means of enhancing students' learning. Instructors were aware of the relevance of online teaching in enhancing students' learning but they exposed negative emotions as a result of challenges they encountered when teaching through online mode. The consequences have been for instructors to suggest other modes of delivery such as evening programmes, weekend programmes, executive programmes and revamping traditional programmes for students who cannot be accommodated in online courses.

Training of instructors on how to teach in an online environment should be organized by OUT so as to allow instructors improve their knowledge and skills for more effective online instruction.

Further, the Open University of Tanzania may need to rethink on more effective means of providing incentives to instructors as a motivation for teaching, also the institution should set policies to authorise promotion criteria for instructors to include effective engagement with online instruction. It is also recommended that the offering of online programmes should be accompanied by evening programmes, weekend programmes, executive programmes and revamping traditional programmes in order to accommodate needs and interests of diverse population of students.

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