



Cresting the Wave: the impact of Covid-19 and academics' professional development at NWU

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Where we have come from: Crisis to Crisis...the Contingency Approach to T-L Planning

NWU at the onset of Covid had a level of readiness inspired by crisis management:

Alert readiness for the University has been shaped in the past by:

- a) **systemic infrastructure crises** like load-shedding to...
- b) **sectoral sustainability crises** like #FeesMustFall to...
- c) **localized community crises** such as student leadership conflict, protest concerning admissions, NFSAS, service delivery protests and the like.

For all three forms of crisis, business **Contingency Plans** were featured (for example, the Faculty Contingency Plans in place since 2018) development for off-campus teaching-learning for **short-term** disruptions.

From Crisis to Continuity...(or what Covid-19 did, for, or to us?)

- Contingency had to be redefined from **short-term plans** for short term disruptions to a **longer-term perspective** (unpredictability of the time factor);
- Contingency had to be redefined to allow for a shift committee-based management to short-term **command-and-control**, to longer-term **consensus development**;
- Contingency had to provide for **quick formations** for collective wisdom generation (consensus generation as a means for longer term planning) but in a **repeatable and sustainable** manner for the longer term;
- Contingency had to shift to provide for one-on-one interaction and physical meetings to interactions made possible by virtual modalities (zoom, vidyo etc) throughout the leadership structures of the University.
- All the above entailed a conceptual shift from contingency to continuity planning.

Understanding the **W**ave (as analogy to Covid-19 and educational change)



Photo credit above: Nick Selway:

<https://za.pinterest.com/pin/289919294736953641/>

<http://bigwavesoulsurfer.tumblr.com/post/47783004133/kangaroo-island> accessed on 28 September, 2021

The Wave: a seeming progression but an orbital experience. The language of Covid is a language of waves with peaks and troughs. Utilisation of the opportunity from an educational perspective is affected similarly by retrospective pull and prospective push factors: **thus the opportunity of the Covid-19 learning experience risks an unthinking and nostalgic return to pre-Covid-19 conditions**

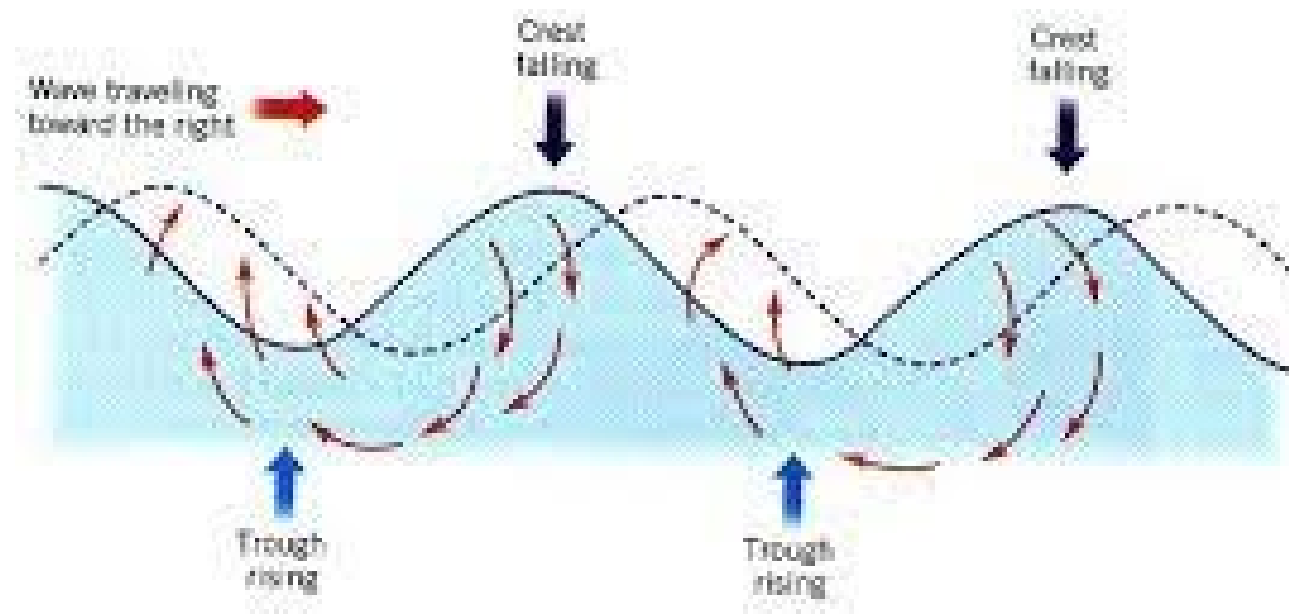


Figure 9.10

Waves travel because gravity pulls the water in the crests downward. Forced out from beneath the falling crests, the falling water pushes the former troughs upward, and the wave moves to a new position, as indicated. (Notice that the actual motion of the water itself beneath these waves is circular or orbital, which confirms our experience that we are carried up and forward as the wave approaches, and down and back as it passes.)

Educational features of the Wave so far...from the perspective of praxis.

Paulo Freire defines praxis in Pedagogy of the Oppressed as "reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed." (1970, p.126).

- Conceptualisations of **educational presence** (ie contact whether online or f2f) have changed in light of what we have learned from the impact of Covid-19 on education praxis (pedagogy, curriculum design).
- Monitoring presence is more difficult if the educational offering (lecture or assessment) is offline (asynchronous). Monitoring presence is somewhat easier in synchronous online teaching and learning.
- Presence monitoring though a requirement for engagement, is not evidence of **engagement**.
- Evidence of engagement occurs through f2f or online participation in activities including assessments and assignments (especially those of a cooperative and collaborative nature) (see Johnson & Johnson 2013).

Student Teaching-Learning Value Proposition for 2022

NWU offers a contact (contact by students with academics in the contact as well as distance modalities) teaching-learning experience in which is entailed **face-to-face teaching-learning for small groups** (to anticipate the continued threat of Covid-19 and the need for physical distancing) in balance with the need for **small group online (synchronous) teaching and learning**, together with the possibility of a shift from large-group teaching (in favour of the flipped classroom whereby large-group lecturers are available online) in which **large groups are replaced by purposeful smaller-group teaching and learning**. Within this **hybrid approach**, technology is used to enable better **self-pacing, self-direction, and collaborative learning in (asynchronous) online and face-to-face contact teaching and learning**. These dimensions also allow for adjustment in relation to further fluctuations in Lockdown levels.

From Propositions to Academic Professional Development for a hybrid teaching learning offering at NWU

Academic professional development entails academic as well as teaching-learning support staff development at the NWU:

- A **deepening of educational awareness** (pedagogy, curricula, teaching philosophy). How? Through centres for teaching and learning in faculties (CHPE, CHEPD, CED, TELIT-SA etc) ;
- An **intensifying focus** on technology-enhanced-learning support and teaching support and capacity development in CTL.
- **Championing** of teaching-learning innovation and communities of practice approaches to professional development opportunities within Faculties (through the anticipated NWU T-L fellowship programme, UCDG related projects etc).
- **Recognising achievement** in multiple contexts and in multiple forms (the Faculty Teaching-Learning Awards, ITEA Awards and events such as this).

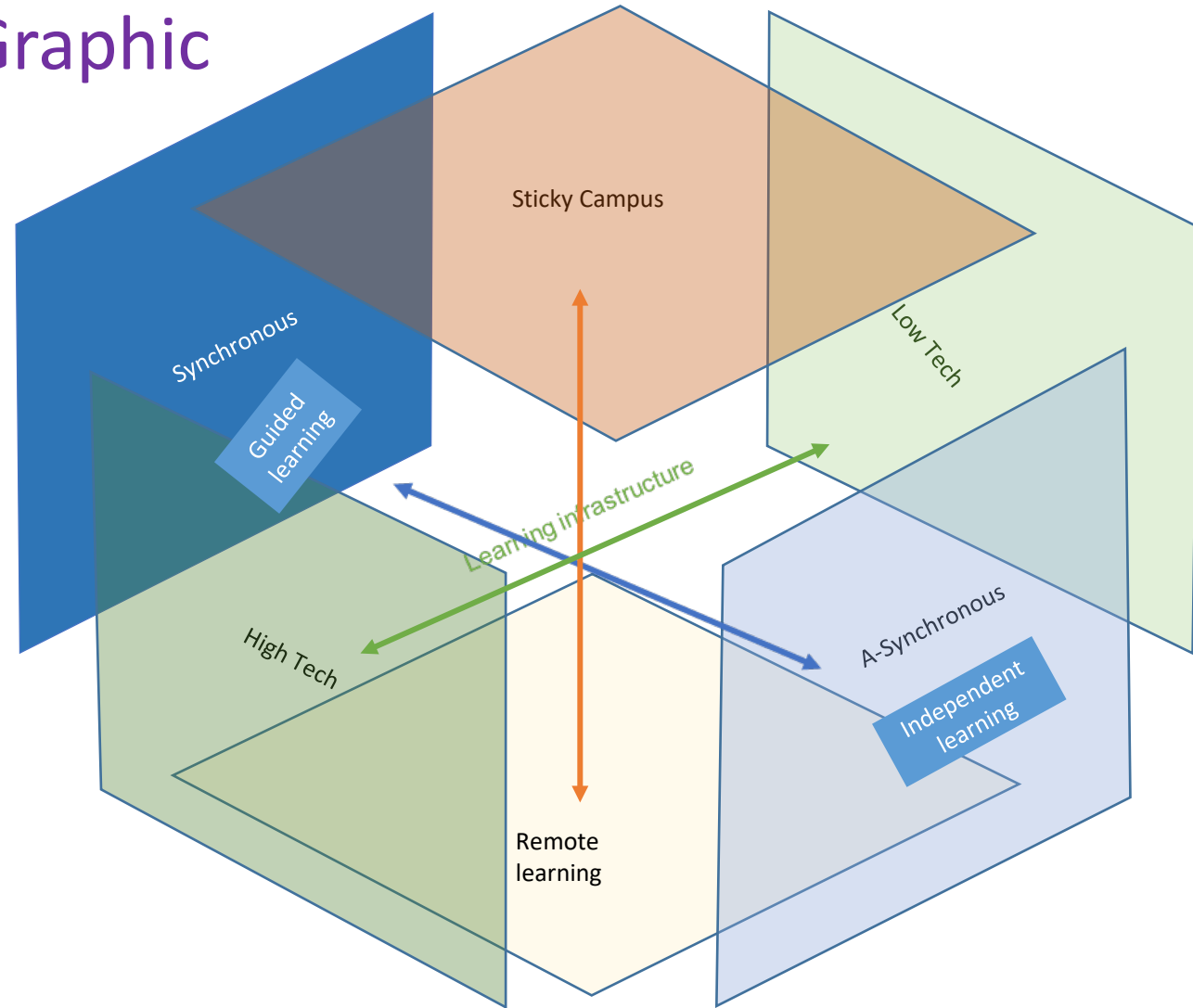
From Propositions to Spatial Design for a hybrid teaching learning offering at NWU

NWU is a contact and distance education provider. Teaching-learning spaces account for the provision of education in both modes at present:

- We have **broadcast studios** in the UODL in which whiteboard technology and interactivity (minimal) with students is ongoing;
- And we have **lecture capture technology** availability at the NWU (in UODL as well as selected contact T-L venues).
- Pre-Covid-19 data suggests that distance students preferred downloading pre-recorded lectures (**asynchronous**).
- Covid-19 data suggests that students contact prefer a combination of real-time (**synchronous**) lecture offering as well as pre-recorded lecture offerings.

The 2022 value proposition is represented in the graphic. It entails **technology-uses for physical and virtual teaching learning spaces,** and anticipates the kind of systems and support that will make possible the a hybrid experiences for students and staff

CTL Graphic



Cresting the Wave entails wresting the insights from Covid-19, and applying a praxis focus to a changed education proposition going forward



Erlantz Pérez Rodríguez/Getty Images. <https://www.rd.com/list/wave-photos/> accessed 28 September, 2021

The action research and critical pedagogic wave-cycle

Derived from an understanding of Praxis, critical insights leading to the T-L approach to 2022 arise from:

- i) **consultation** with the T-L Leadership at our twice monthly meetings 2020-2021;
- ii) **engagement** with teaching-learning support expertise (CTL);
- iii) **action** taken for the teaching and learning offering for 2020-2021;
- iv) **reflection** at the T-L Colloquium on the Future of Teaching and Learning at the NWU (23-24 August, 2021) and also the Annual Teaching and Learning Conference of the NWU (19-21 October, 2021);
- v) **reflection** on the experience of teaching and learning: staff and students in 2020-2021;
- vi) **application** of insights derived from the scholarship of teaching-learning on **collaborative, cooperative and self-directed learning** (all of which are part of the NWU T-L Strategy (2021-2025)).
- vii) **forecasting** on how to offer a better education offering in 2022.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this important conference of the NWU!

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Thank you to the CTL team and capable leadership of Dr Manuela Fernandez-Martins and Dr Jessica Pool in organisation of the programme and the event!