



Navigating online teaching in the time of COVID-19

Without a strategic plan, teachers will be lost in the maze of online teaching.

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Shandu, T.P. (2018). "A glimpse into mobile learning in open distance learning (South Africa)". In Mobile Learning and Higher Education (pp. 67-81). Routledge.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted lives in many ways, including the way we teach and learn. Almost overnight, the ordinary, normal and traditional modes of teaching and learning have morphed into unfamiliar uncertainties. Teachers are frustrated, overwhelmed and

unsure because they are expected to teach on new platforms through computers and mobile phones.

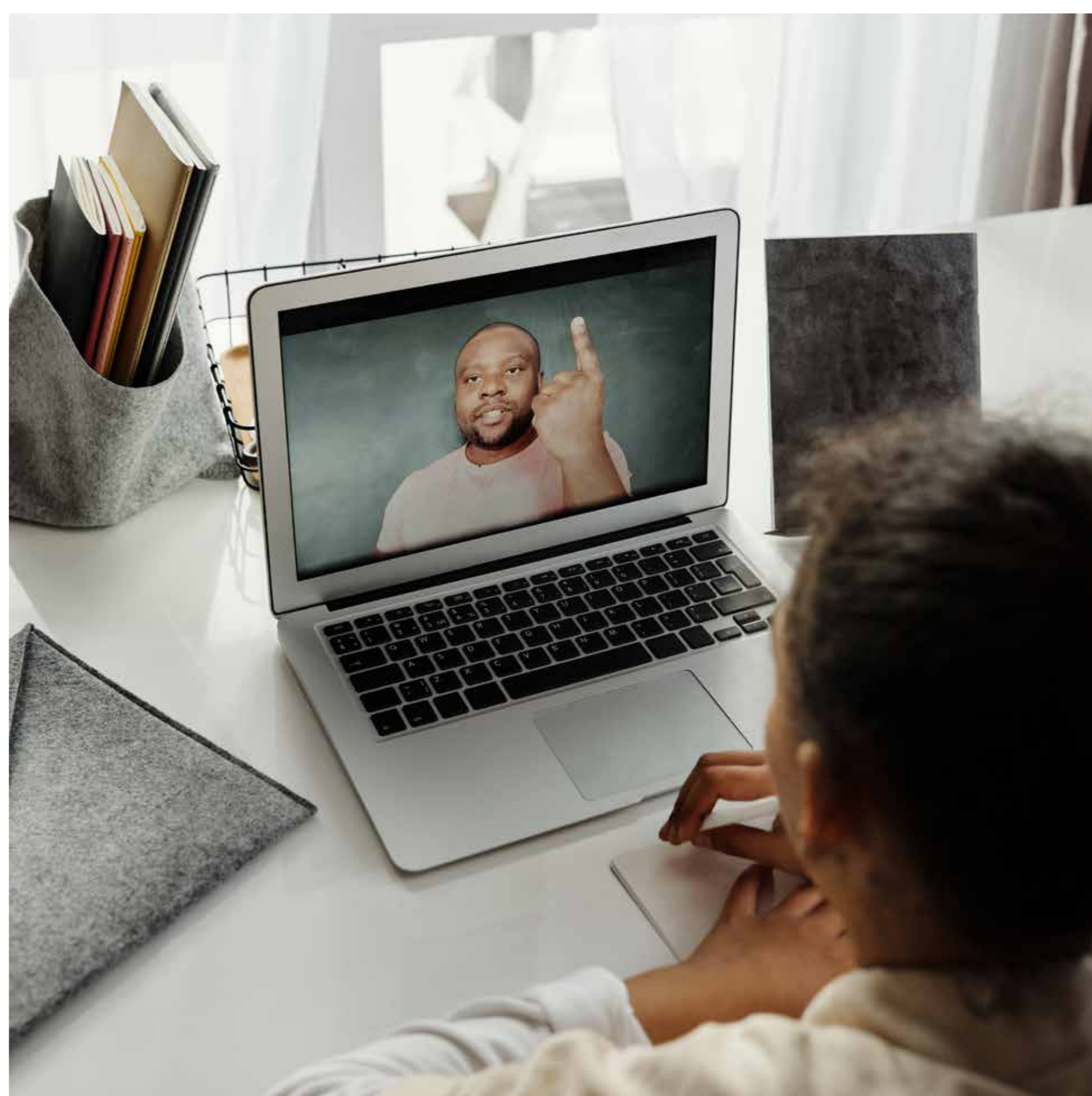
A framework called the community of inquiry (CoI) can be used for digital teaching and learning. The CoI (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000) asserts that for any successful

teaching and learning, there has to be social presence, cognitive presence and teaching presence. For successful teaching and learning, a teacher has to design teaching activities, considering the varied home environments; the teacher has to facilitate discourse and interaction with and among learners; and then the teacher has to find ways of teaching content explicitly.

"If the teaching presence is not facilitated, then we might end up with haphazard pseudo-learning, inefficient learning management and disengaged monodirectional delivery of content that lacks interaction," says Dr Thuli Shandu-Phetla.

While some children have access to computers, tablets and smartphones, others do not have electricity or even food at home. However, with the flexibility of technology, teachers can use a variety of platforms, such as Zoom, Google Classroom, WhatsApp or SMS messages - depending on affordability - to engage with learners.

"Teachers do not have to navigate the digital literacy maze by themselves. Experts are available to assist, and UNISA has such a project for capacitating teachers in online teaching."



Online teaching does not have to be that difficult.