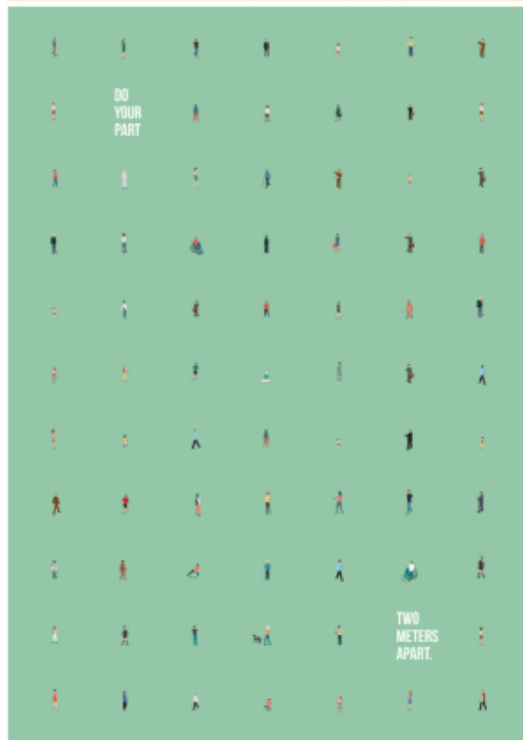




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## Rethinking assessment practices in Higher Education institutions during COVID19 academic season

When Corona virus hit the shores of South Africa, the government declared a national state of disaster and adopted containment measures, including the closure of institutions of higher learning. Consequently, there was a shift to online pedagogy, which promotes, amongst other skills, independent learning. This meant that students had to stay at home, in that way, joining a society which is riddled with socio-political ills and filled with rhythms of constant social change. Since the country has and is still on lockdown, the question that remains is: what transferrable skills have students acquired pre -covid19 academic learning that will enable them to contribute to the needs of society?

One of the areas that is significant in learning and teaching is assessment. The ways in which assessment is carried out have implications for the students' future life and indirectly impacts the society at large. Prescriptive policies encourage a rigid approach to assessment that dictates what must be assessed as well as how and when it must be assessed. The diversity of students is in most cases disregarded in assessment practices as all students are assessed in the same way regardless of their background and the knowledge and experience they bring to the learning process. Ongoing discussions focus on such topics as whether a student's success in examinations relates to high standards, what assessment tasks are best for learning and whether assessment practices promote lifelong learning. Furthermore, it is common to see assessment practices privileging certain values, languages and processes. Currently, students are not part of the design of

assessment tools and negotiations regarding assessment processes. This contradicts the notion that humans are motivated by a need to reason and engage in the process of becoming (Freire, 1970) and also by McArthur's (2015) view that assessment should be understood as social practice that will contribute to societal transformation. For us sustainable assessment is a process where students are guided to make their own judgements about learning and their agency is developed so that they are not just passive students who have complied with rigid assessment regimes. In this way, as agents of social change and future teachers, they then become citizens who can negotiate, reason, make judgements, give and receive feedback. We challenge colleagues and students to debate and rethink assessment processes and practices used in HEIs. We ask the following questions: how can assessment practices and processes contribute to preparing 21st century teachers to be lifelong learners? How can lecturer's assessment practices enable student teachers to plan and monitor their own learning and make judgements about issues they face in their everyday lives? How can HEIs adopt assessment processes that are humane and take into consideration what students bring into the assessment process, what they do with assessment and what transferrable skills they can learn from the process which will enable them to be agents of change in society? These questions contribute to SDG 4: Quality Education, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

*Prof N. Mdzanga, Dr H. Sathoraz, Dr Deidre Geduld, Dr Muki Moeng*