

ONLINE TEACHING: CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES



WHAT IS ONLINE TEACHING?



Delivery of instruction using different Web-based technologies, from the Internet or an intranet and other communication technologies, that enable students to participate in learning activities beyond the campus, from students' homes to workplaces and other locations (Zhu, Payette, & DeZure, 2003)



WHAT VULEKA SSB DID TO PREPARE FOR ONLINE TEACHING

We were going to use online teaching for the first time in April and we anticipated limitations in using remote learning.

We were also introducing this remotely.

There was, therefore, need for us to prepare for this so that we would set our teachers and learners for success.

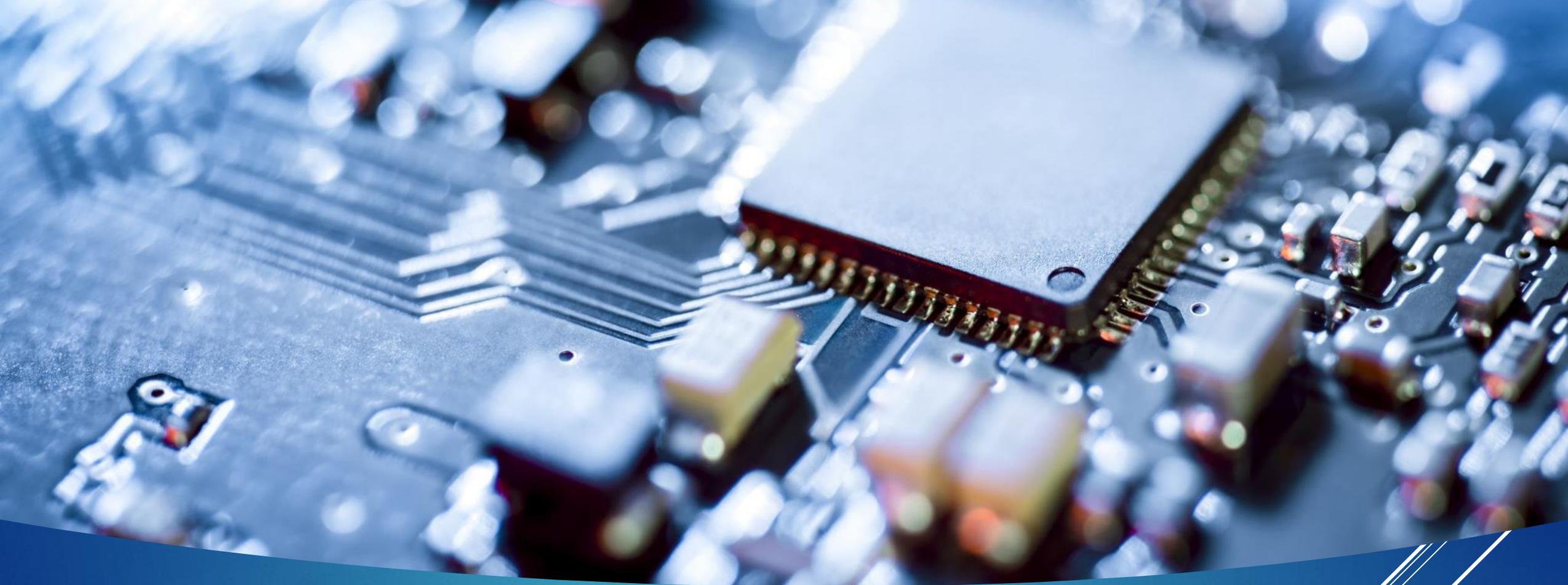
We did not take anything for granted.

We wanted to reach out to all our learners.

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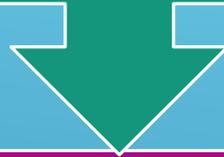
- ▶ We conducted surveys with our parents to establish what gadgets and platforms we were going to use.
 - ▶ Vuleka SSB trained teachers in using Edmodo, WhatsApp and Zoom. These were the platforms we were going to use.
 - ▶ We created WhatsApp groups and Edmodo classes for our learners.
 - ▶ Our teachers trained learners to use Edmodo, WhatsApp and Zoom.
 - ▶ It was important to train teachers and learners because we needed to formalise communication with learners on these platforms. We foresaw challenges that would come if our teachers and learners were not trained.
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- ▶ We wanted our learners and teachers to use technology appropriately and responsibly.
 - ▶ This entailed having protocols on when and where to teach and learn.
 - ▶ We therefore made a timetable for online classes that ran from 8 AM to 2 PM from Monday to Friday. This later changed to 8 AM to 12 PM from Monday to Thursday.
 - ▶ We emphasised the need for both our teachers and learners to use appropriate places for lessons. Time was also taken seriously Communication was between 8 AM and 4 PM.
 - ▶ We constantly got feedback from our learners, teachers and parents through surveys and meetings.
 - ▶ We conducted parent grade meetings in which we received feedback about online classes from parents.
 - ▶ We used feedback from learners, teachers and parents to see what was working and what was not working.
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DEVICES USED

The surveys we conducted provided us with information on the gadgets that our parents and learners had and could use.



We were able to find out that some of our children would use their parents' gadgets and that meant that we needed to respect certain protocols.

Cell
phones

Tablets

Laptops

Desktops

Ipads

PLATFORMS USED FOR ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING BY VULEKA SSB



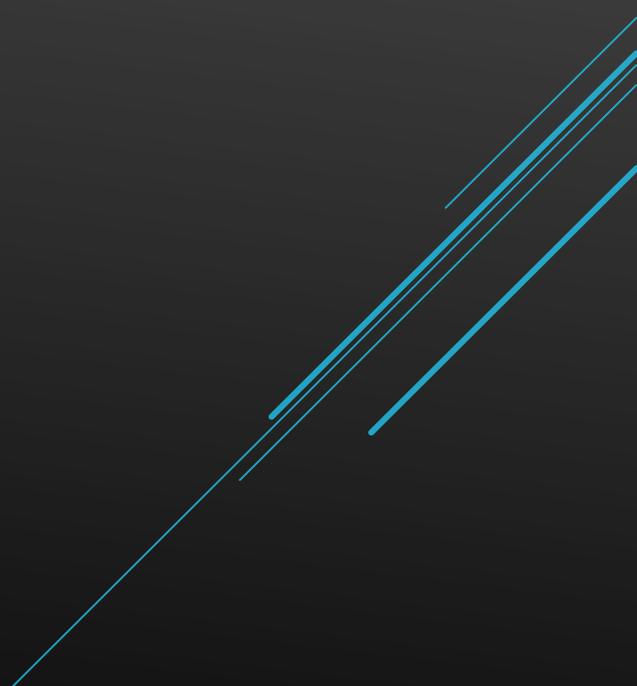
WHATSAPP

- ▶ Our teachers created class WhatsApp groups for their teaching areas. These groups were used for teaching and learning.
 - ▶ Classes were conducted in these groups.
 - ▶ Texts, notes, voice notes, video clips, graphs, diagrams and photographs were shared in these classes and there was immediate feedback from the learners (conversational).
 - ▶ Our teachers also created WhatsApp groups for our parents.
 - ▶ Some of our learners did not have cell phones they could not take part in the WhatsApp classes and the teachers shared work with the parents. The affected learners would get their work from the parents.
 - ▶ All work for the week was submitted to HODs who would check for quality and quantity before classes and before it was shared with parents.
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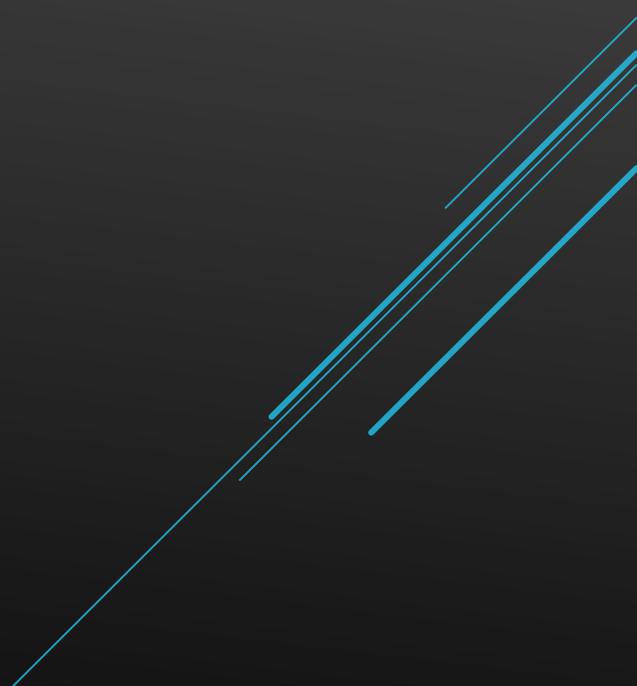
EDMODO

- ▶ The same process followed for WhatsApp was used for Edmodo classes.
- ▶ Edmodo had more advantages for teaching and learning compared to WhatsApp. Learners did quizzes and exercises and activities could be posted without challenges.

ZOOM

- ▶ Not all our classes used zoom.
 - ▶ Teachers who wanted to demonstrate something for learners would conduct zoom classes, Science Teachers used this platform to demonstrate some experiments.
 - ▶ Maths teachers also found zoom as a good tool to demonstrate Math problems.
 - ▶ Zoom was not popular with because it lacked many features that were good for the classroom. It was also expensive, used a lot of data.
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MICROSOFT TEAMS

- ▶ Surveys and consultations made us to conclude that Microsoft Teams is the best tool for teaching and learning online. It has got great features for teaching.
 - ▶ All our teachers were trained to use Microsoft Teams.
 - ▶ Teachers trained learners to use the tool and created teams for their classes.
 - ▶ Microsoft Teams is the only platform we are using currently for our blended learning.
 - ▶ Teachers upload learning material, notes, tasks and activities for learners to complete.
 - ▶ We have been live streaming all our classes to cater for learners whose parents were not comfortable.
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WEIGHING THE SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES OF ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING AT VULEKA SSB HIGH SCHOOL



A close-up photograph of a chessboard with several dark wooden pieces standing upright and one white piece lying on its side. The word "SUCCESSES" is overlaid in white text on the left side of the image. The background is a blurred, warm-toned light source, possibly a window or a lamp, creating a soft glow. The chessboard has a black and white checkered pattern.

SUCCESSES

- ▶ “The key to success was to be very well prepared, in a way very different from the usual. I had to spend time making pre-recorded videos of me explaining topics while using a white board. These were made in conjunction with further explanatory pre-recorded voice notes, which were kept in sequential order. This facilitated a simple roll out of lessons and gave the learners an opportunity to visualize the lesson as it occurred.” Maths Teacher
- ▶ “Although a video of experiments cannot give you the same effect as doing the experiments yourself, the videos at least gave learners an opportunity to see science in action. I used YouTube videos of experiments to enhance the learning experience.” Science Teacher

- ▶ We managed to 90% of our learners on WhatsApp within a short space of time and this was followed by classes and learning went well.
- ▶ Following our school calendar we were supposed to open school for second term on the 14th of April and we opened on that date with our online classes starting on the same date.
- ▶ Our grade 8 – 11 are on track with the curriculum because we were able to start school on the date on our calendar.
- ▶ Our grade 12 classes are on track and we had online classes with them during the March/April holiday and the online classes prepared them for the online learning programme that was to follow.
- ▶ Online classes made our teachers to be more prepared. There is a need to prepare more when a teacher prepares for a learner that they will not see in class. Content was simplified.

- ▶ When schools opened for grade 12s and grade 7s on 3 June, we got an opportunity to get parents and learners walk in school to fetch learning packs. This helped learners who did not have access to online classes.
 - ▶ Learners can go on Teams at any time and access recorded lessons. This also helps learners who are slow to catch up.
 - ▶ Collaboration among teachers improved.
 - ▶ As a school, we also improved our communication and knowledge of technology.
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CHALLENGES

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- ▶ Not easy for HODs to check up on staff.
 - ▶ Difficult for teachers to set work without their textbooks.
 - ▶ Difficult to distribute report cards, some parents did not have email addresses or WhatsApp.
 - ▶ Some learners could not concentrate because they were hungry. We have a feeding scheme at school.
 - ▶ Some learners live in areas where there is no electricity, and they could not charge their phones to be able to attend online classes.
 - ▶ Poor attendance of learners due to socio-economic challenges.
 - ▶ In using WhatsApp, there was also a time delay between sending a voice note and allowing learners time to listen to it before we could further engage on the concept.
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- ▶ WhatsApp also caused a time delay between sending a voice note and allowing learners time to listen to it before further engaging on the concept.
- ▶ Teaching via WhatsApp was particularly challenging. Messages and voice notes got lost amongst the entire conversation and sequential following was particularly difficult for learners that experienced connectivity issues and then tried to catch up later.
- ▶ Children learn best from seeing science in play. The inability to do actual experiments was not ideal.

MEASUREMENT OF SUCCESS



- ▶ This was done at times in very simple ways, example by just asking a learner to explain a particular concept that was thought in the previous lesson.
- ▶ Giving learners exercises to complete and marking them thereof.
- ▶ Testing learners via online quizzes or longer more theoretical tests.
- ▶ “The most valuable test of the online success was when the Grade 12’s got back to school, and I began with a revision of the work taught during the online classes. Learners were able to participate and they clearly knew what I was teaching.” Science Teacher
- ▶ Baseline assessments were administered to check how much was learnt and our results showed that our learners mastered concepts that were taught online.
- ▶ Feedback from parents and learners has been positive.

THANK YOU

Lawrence Manyesa: Vuleka SSB High School Principal

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