Online Assessments for Reflection within a Large Class: A Case Study of English for Educational Development Law Students at the University of the Western Cape

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ABSTRACT: *This study reports on the use of online assessments in English for an Educational Development module for law students at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa. It highlights the benefits of using the method of an online test to manage and enable learning by reflection in a large class setting. The design and development of online materials and assessment activities is based on a theoretical and conceptual framework that stems from the main schools of learning, namely behaviourism, cognitivism, and constructivism, and alternative assessment. Upon the completion of the course, a survey of 12 questions was given to 530 students to determine the benefits and challenges they experienced while completing their online test within a formative and reflective context. The adoption of e-Learning practices to enhance teaching and learning was explored and has shown its advantages. Results revealed that this method enables students to engage with learning materials, stay motivated, and test their own understanding of meaningful knowledge in the English language especially in the Law context. It is evident that the use of online methods for testing are beneficial for a large class context as in this case. It makes the learning and management thereof easier for both the learner and educator and accommodates different learning styles. Apart from the advantages, the findings of this study included some ethical and technical challenges and disadvantages of online assessments.*

KEYWORDS: English for Educational Development (EED), large classes, Law, online assessment, reflection

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Introduction

Legal English, which is the focus of this paper, is distinguished from standard international English in that it refers to the style of English employed by legal professionals in the workplace. Commonly known as 'legalese', it is different from the language we read in newspapers or tabloids, and it is mainly used in local and international legal contracts and statutes. Crandall and Charrow (1979) outline several characteristics of legal discourse, related principally to vocabulary and grammar. Among these features are the frequent use of common words with uncommon meanings (e.g. the use of 'action' for 'lawsuit'), the frequent use of Old and Middle English words the likes of 'aforesaid' and 'said' and 'such' as adjectives, the frequent use of Latin words and phrases (e.g. *in propria persona*, *amicus curiae*, etc.), the use of French words such as '*lien'*, '*easement'* and '*tort'*; the use of jargon such as 'month-to-month tenancy' and 'eminent domain', and the use of in-group communication or 'professional language' (e.g. 'pierce the corporate veil' and 'due care'. Legal discourse also abounds with the use of doublets and triplets, unusual word order, unfamiliar pro-forms, pronominal adverbs, and phrasal verbs.

English for specific or legal purposes (ESP) is taught in universities and higher education colleges across the globe. For instance, ESP courses are offered in the training of paralegal lawyers in English-speaking countries and beyond. The emergence of English as the language of international business gave another impetus to law faculties to introduce English language courses to enhance the language skills of trainees and prepare them to work in global, international, and diversified markets. However, the enhancement of student skills in legal discourse requires the adoption of a holistic approach to learning that takes into consideration content, learning materials, assessment and evaluation, and the mode of learning (i.e., contact, blended, or fully online). In an online environment, the management of knowledge and learning must be prioritized. Knowledge acquisition has been a topic of interest in the area of information systems (IS) in the past twenty years. As Travica (2013) points out, "Knowledge develops through a process of learning, which engages other cognitive processes (e.g., perception, meaning creation, reasoning, and memorizing)". Therefore, the process of dissemination of knowledge into a format which will be understandable to learners requires the use of knowledge systems, which in the university case, is that of a learning management system (LMS). The use of a LMS assists with the codification of learning materials and online assessment activities into a format which learners can understand and internalize. This allows for knowledge to be managed in a way that learners will be able to retrieve and apply in their own learning.

At the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in South Africa, a blended-learning approach has been used by various faculties for more than a decade. This method is supported by the use of an institutionalised LMS (Sakai-based iKamva) which is operated by UWC's Centre for Innovative Education and Communication Technologies (CIECT) unit. Online assessments have therefore become one of the e-tools increasingly used by lecturers across faculties at UWC. The advancements in education technology have paved the way for various types of assessments. Summative assessments today are supplemented by formative assessments throughout the academic year. One common type that has flourished because of technology is continuous assessment (CA), or alternative assessment (AA). AA is generally defined as a situation in which "students are evaluated on what they integrate and produce rather than on what they are able to recall and reproduce" (Huerta-Macias, 2002, p.339). AA includes several strategies that are used to verify what students can do or produce (Grabin, 2007; Herman et al., 1992). In the language classroom, AA is viewed as "a type of evaluation that directly evaluates learners' language skills" and shows their ability to use those skills (Opp-Beckman & Klinghammer, 2006, p.105). It is therefore an assessment for learning rather than an assessment of learning. Unlike traditional assessments, this type of formative assessment does not aim at ranking students or determining the amount of knowledge they have acquired, but at enhancing their learning (Teican, 2016). AAs pay attention to ownership of learning and sharing the responsibility of evaluations with students. That is, it assumes that learners should be engaged in self and peer-assessments (Stoynoff, 2012). From a constructivist perspective of learning, AA is an instruction

driven process in which students construct their own knowledge (Dochy & McDowell, 1997; Janisch et al., 2007). This perspective places a strong emphasis on the integration of learning, instruction, and assessment, giving students more active roles in assessment practices (Moqbel & Al-kadi, 2020). In addition to increasing students' sense of responsibility for their own education and motivating them to study in greater depth, this method also provides students with constructive feedback on their progress and achievements. Alternative assessments are wide ranging and often include performance-based assessments such as projects, role-playing, problem-based learning, presentations, critical analyses, discussions/debates, writing samples, reflective pieces, reports, digital storytelling, cloze tests, case-based scenarios, and open-ended questions. Portfolios, self-assessment (journals, learning logs, conferences, and checklists), peer assessment, and games are also common types of AAs. Students are encouraged to develop higher order thinking and critical thinking skills through the use of AAs, which are designed to be more authentic in nature than traditional assessments. As Wiggins (1993, p.229) points out, alternative assessments involve:

> engaging and worthy problems or questions of importance, in which students must use knowledge to fashion performances effectively and creatively. The tasks are either replicas of or analogous to the kinds of problems faced by adult citizens and consumers or professionals in the field.

AA has gained traction globally. There is a growing body of research on the nature of this type of assessment, its principles, criteria, and methods. Researchers have examined various aspects of AA, such as its implementation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms and its effects on EFL learners' language skills. There is a dearth of studies on the use of alternative, or authentic assessments in the ESP classroom in general, and in large classes in particular. Hence, this study aims to explore to what extent online assessment can be effective in larger classes, such as the English for Education Development (EED) Law 101 class at UWC. This study investigates the benefits and disadvantages of online tests in a large class context from the perspectives of the students themselves. It attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the advantages of online assessments for evaluating the performance of students in a large English for Education Development (EED) class?
2. What are the disadvantages of online assessments for evaluating the performance of students in a large English for Education Development (EED) class?

Literature Review
As noted, a plethora of studies have been conducted on AA in general, including (Grabin, 2007; Chirimbu, 2013; Öz, 2014; Ghaicha & Omarkaly, 2018), among others. Other studies have dealt with key methods and techniques of AA, such as self-assessment (Moheidat & Baniabdelrahman, 2011; Honsa, 2013; Meihami & Varmaghani, 2013; Alibakhshi & Shahrakipour, 2014; Ghaslani, 2015), peer assessment (Azarnoosh, 2013; Mohammed, 2021), portfolio assessment (Shokraie & Tabrizi, 2016), conferencing assessment (Baleghizadeh & Zarghami, 2012) and performance-based assessment (Yildirim & Orsdemir, 2013). These studies, along with others, shed light on the usefulness of AA and its incorporation into language instruction.

Other studies have investigated teaching and assessment practices in some university-level ESP courses. Alvi et al. (2021) dealt with ESP courses at King Khalid University in Saudi Arabia. The study focused on ESP teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on interviews and surveys from lecturers and students, the study concluded that teaching and learning ESP courses at the University is hindered by technology, pedagogy, and assessment-related challenges. Teaching legal Arabic for courts in a US context was explored in Aloush's (2015) study. A course was designed to enhance the language skills of law students. Despite students in the program having high Arab-language proficiency, the study reported a

myriad of problems that students encounter, including reading legal cases, writing seminar papers, and participating in seminar classes, among others. The course for legal Arabic aimed to enhance speaking skills through autonomous interaction, chain dialogue, transformation, reinstatement, substitution, and translation. Students were required to write frequent reports, memos, and research papers to help enhance their writing skills. Additionally, reading and listening activities were incorporated into speaking and writing tasks. Similarly, Lamri (2019) diagnosed the situation of teaching English for law professionals at Algerian universities, pointing out that the courses mainly focus on teaching specific words and phrases and translating some texts. The grammar translation method was identified as the main teaching methodology in these courses. Building on these studies, this study has attempted to design an ELP blended course based on a content language integrated learning model. This study also investigated the attitudes of teachers and students towards this model. Students showed a positive attitude towards having additional English reading comprehension activities online.

Baranova et al. (2021) assessed the application of a content and language integrated learning model in a multilingual classroom. The study explored the efficiency of this model from the perspective of students to identify the impact of such a model on their professional discipline, learning outcomes, and the extent to which the learning model contributes to an improvement in foreign language proficiency. The findings of the study showed that the proposed learning model had a positive impact on students' Spanish proficiency. Students scored higher marks on listening, reading, and speaking than those who did not use the model.

Insofar as e-assessments in language classes are generally concerned, Wolf and Lopez (2022) developed a technology-based learning prototype for assessing the reading skills of English language learners. The study specifically used formative assessment to support the teaching and learning of academic reading skills. The findings of the study indicated that the use of sound assessment tools facilitates effective formative assessment processes and greatly contributes to enhancement of the reading skills of English language learners. Similarly, Kilickaya (2017) investigated the perceptions of EFL teachers towards the use of a technology tool called *GradeCam Go!* for formative assessment. The results of the study revealed that the participants overwhelmingly valued *GradeCam Go!* due to its features such as automated grading of printed forms of multiple-choice assessments, providing teachers and students with immediate feedback. The findings of the study suggest that *GradeCam Go!* could be an extremely helpful tool for educators who work in schools with large classrooms and limited access to technological resources.

There are also several studies on assessments in large language classes. Iaria and Hubball (2008), for instance, investigated the impact of class size on student interaction and the achievement of learning objectives. The study compared the outcomes in both large and small class settings. Students in both contexts were taught by the same instructor, using similar pedagogical approaches. The study's findings suggest that, in contrast to small-size classes, students in large-size classes are more hesitant to interact spontaneously during class. The study recommended the enhancement of classroom communities and interactions in large classes. The study also recommended that large classes should only be used while teaching undergraduate courses in the final years, and not introductory courses. Furthermore, Awan and Kamran (2018) investigated the testing and assessment of large English language classes from the perspectives of 130 students and 10 teachers at the Institute of Southern Punjab. According to student responses, self-assessment promotes student involvement and responsibility. Completing assignments teaches students more than studying course material. The findings of the study also showed that giving presentations aids in the development of student communication skills, group work improves cognitive and social skills, and peer assessment transforms students from passive into active learners.

This is the first study to date that deals with online assessments in EED classes in the South African context. Studies that have analysed online assessments in large classes seem to focus on the attitudes of students towards online assessments or activities that can be marked and scored automatically, or activities that require minimum intervention from lecturers and tutors. However, the assessment techniques used in the course developed in conjunction with this study aim to enhance the writing skills of learners, and to prepare

them for the submission of a final course essay. While some activities can be scored instantly by the system, others require students to write (i.e., open-ended questions), and tutors and lecturers must provide the students with feedback on a regular basis.

Furthermore, this study is part of broader action-based research project that includes the design of a blended EED course for large classes of law students. It is the contention of this study that the delivery of learning materials must be conceptualized and designed effectively, especially in an online context. Therefore, the design process was carefully implemented. Identifying schools of learning was essential for assessing the expected learning elements. Lecturers consulted with the instructional designer at the CIECT to contextualise and set up the assessment activities using innovative methods to test students. Lecturers of UWC's EED Law 101 have used these processes since 2015.

Hence, the design in this study is based on a holistic approach to teaching and assessment that stems from key theories of learning and instructional technology. The following section deals with the theoretical approach adopted in this study and the design of the resources, activities, and authentic assessments in the course.

Theoretical Framework and Learning Prototype

Early computer learning systems were designed based on a behaviourist approach to learning. Behaviourism (Thorndike, 1913; Pavlov, 1927; Skinner, 1974) postulates that learning is a change in observable behaviour caused by external stimuli in the environment (Skinner, 1974). Behaviourists claim that it is the observable behaviour which indicates whether the learner has learned something, and not what is going on in the learner's head. In response, some educators have claimed that not all learning is observable and that there is more to learning than a change in behaviour. As a result, there was a shift away from behaviourism to cognitive learning theories. Cognitive psychology claims that learning involves the use of memory, motivation, and thinking, and that reflection plays an important part in learning. Learning in this theory is an internal process, and the amount learned depends on the processing capacity of the learner, the amount of effort expended during the learning process, the depth of the processing (Craik & Lockhart, 1972; Craik & Tulving, 1975), and a learner's existing knowledge structure (Ausubel, 1974). Recently, there has been a move towards constructivism, which claims that learners interpret information and the world according to their personal reality. They learn by observation, processing, and interpretation, and then integrate the information into personal knowledge (Wilson, 1997). Students learn best when they can contextualize what they learn for immediate application and acquire personal meaning. Analysis of the behaviourist, cognitivist, and constructivist schools of thought shows many overlaps in ideas and principles. The design of online learning materials often includes principles from all three. According to Ertmer and Newby (1993), these three schools can be used as a taxonomy for learning. For instance, behaviourists' strategies can be used to teach the 'what' (facts), cognitive strategies can be used to teach the 'how' (processes and principles), and constructivist strategies can be used to teach the 'why' (higher level thinking that promotes personal meaning and situated, contextual learning). The pedagogical implications of these key learning theories for this study's instructional design are shown in Figure 1.

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Behaviourism
- Synchronous/Asynchronus lectures
- Drill and Practice
- Online Quizes

Cognitivisim
- Synchronous/Asynchronus lectures
- Visualization tools (e.g. mind maps and charts)
- Online essay asessment
- Online test (multiple choice)

Constructivisim
- Discovery learning
- Tutorial discussions
- Collaborative tasks
- Self-assessment and Peer assessment
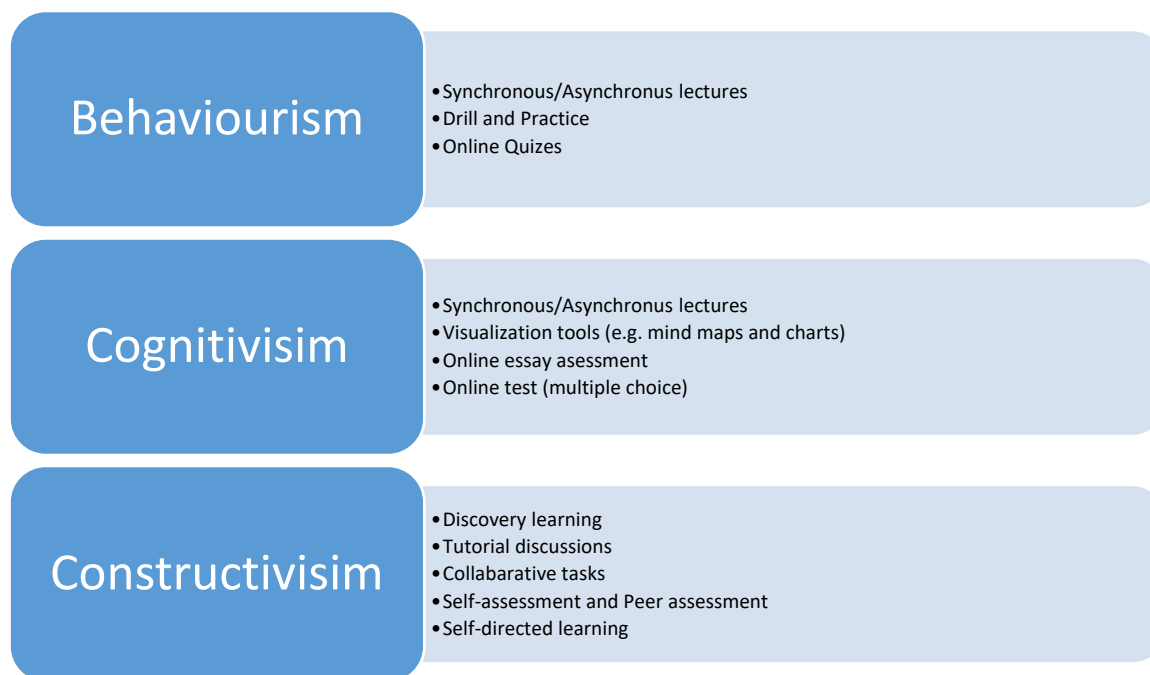- Self-directed learning

Figure 1. Application of Learning Theories in Online Learning

In line with the information in Figure 1, an interactive online space was created on UWC's LMS, on a platform known as iKamva. The interactive blended course enables tutors to share and engage with the EED Law 101 students. Figure 2 below depicts the model that is used in the design.
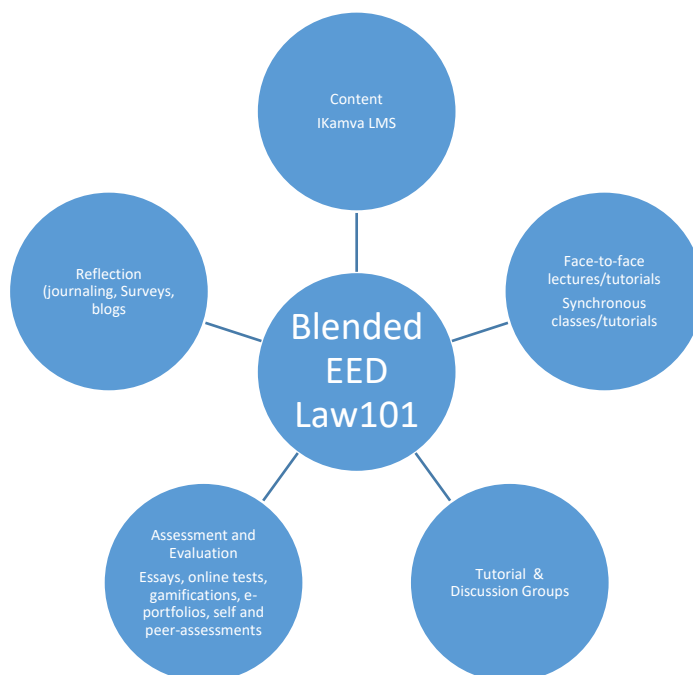

Figure 2. Model for the Design of a Blended Course for EED Law 101

The online environment of a blended course design facilitates the interaction between tutors and their tutorial groups. It further reinforces a structured methodology whereby the lecturers and tutors engage with a large class of 530 students. Learning content is organized in folders, which utilises the 'Course Resources'

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e-tool. The structured content is arranged in a scaffolded manner (i.e., according to each term). The students can view the entire term's content and prepare accordingly, as shown in Figure 3.
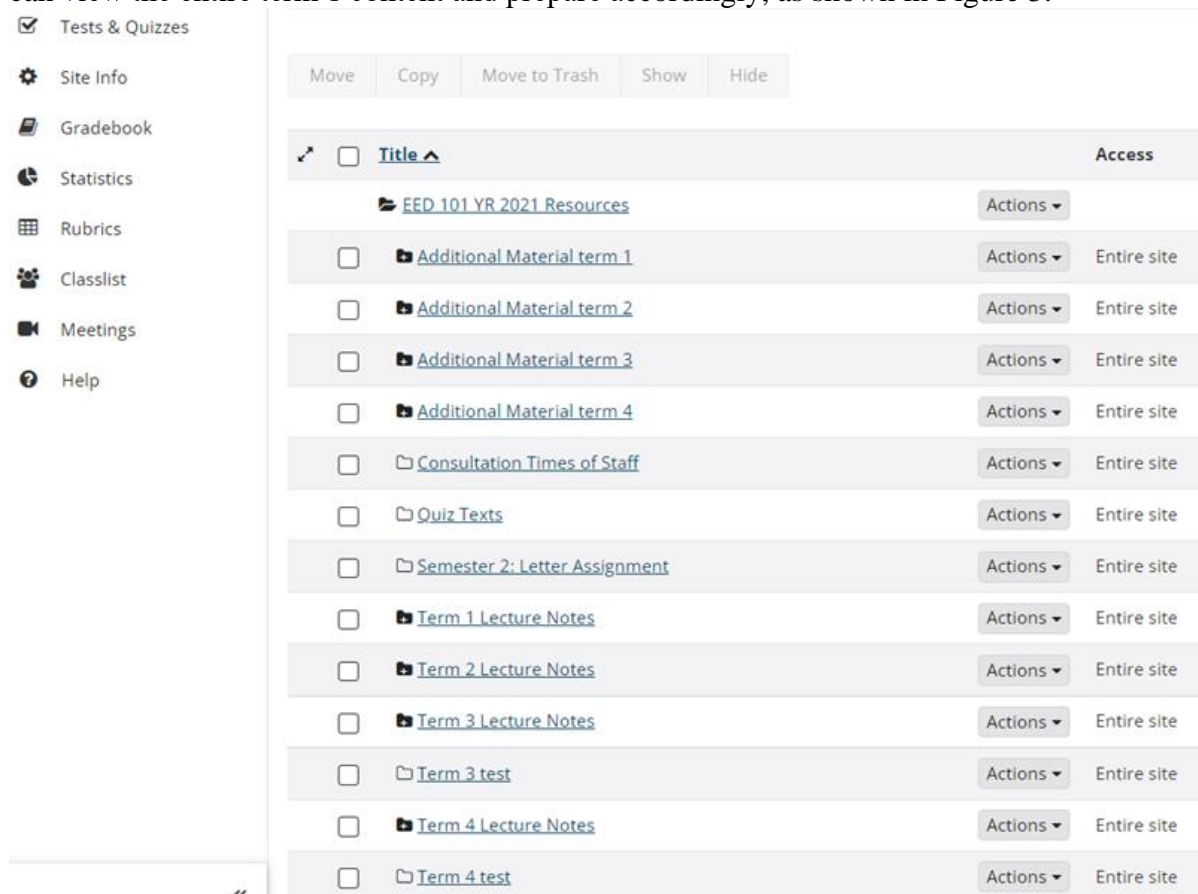

Figure 3. Course Resources for EED Law 101

The tutors for this module actively engage with students via the 'Discussion Forum' e-tool, which is divided into tutorial groups, as shown in Figure 4.
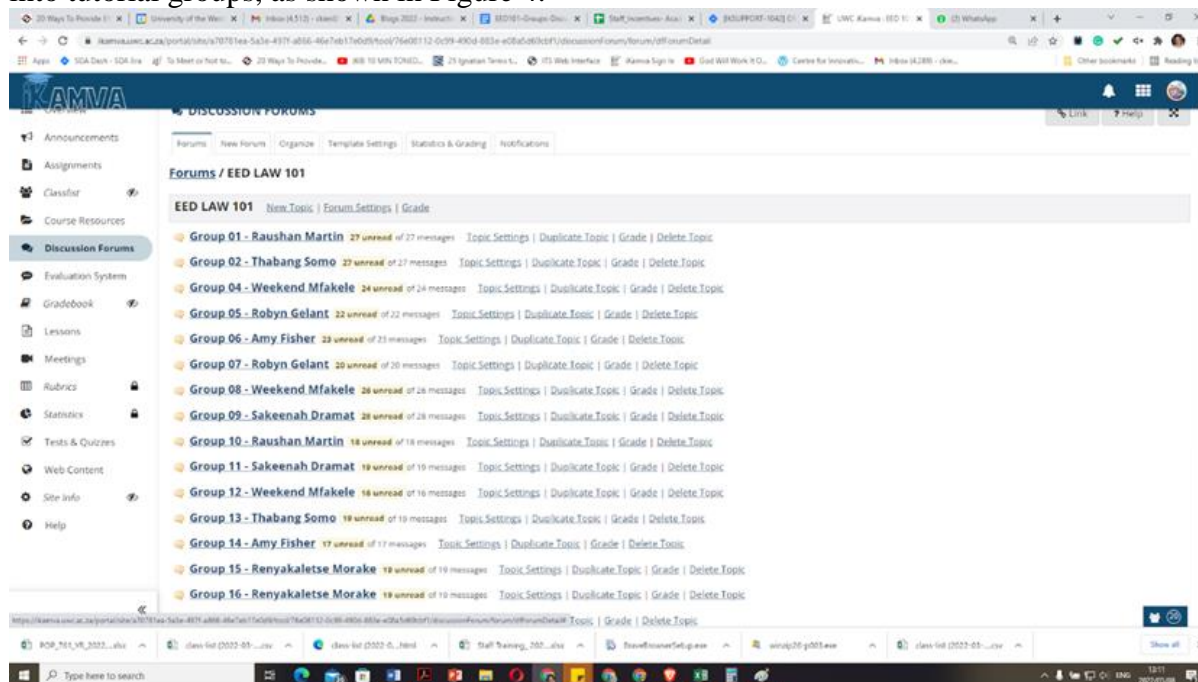
Figure 4. EED Law 101 Tutorial Groups on iKamva

At the beginning of the term, tutors typically share a welcome message with their groups and outline the required activities and expectations for the course. These include lesson content, course outlines, regular iKamva communications, assessment deadlines, and basic netiquette rules. From the start, students are urged to engage by asking questions regarding the course content and expected outcomes. Students are introduced to weekly topics and tasks within the 'Discussion Forum' e-tool, as Figure 5 shows.
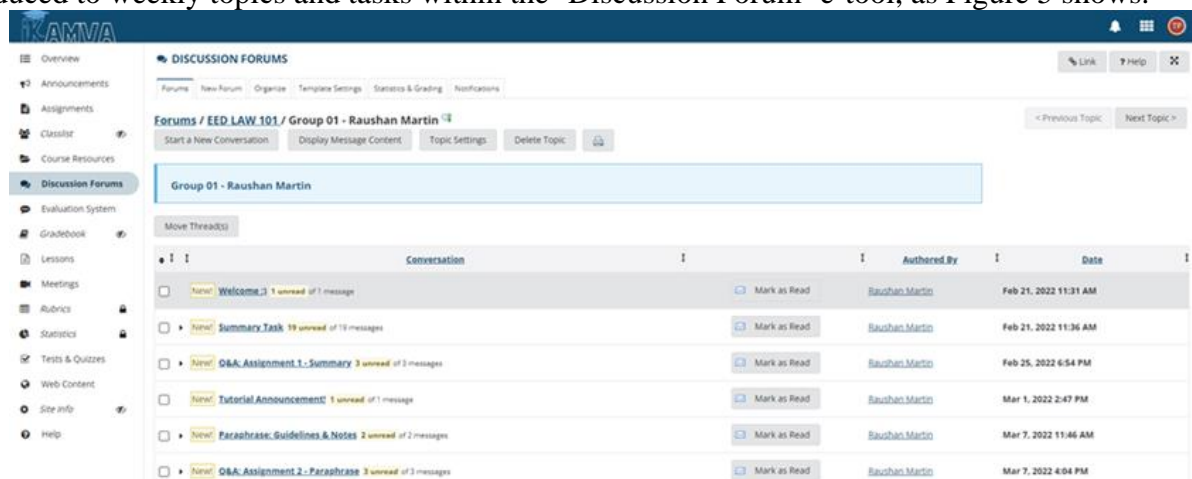

Figure 5. Discussion Groups in EED Law 101

These structured topics are related to the subject-matter and include summarising, paraphrasing, referencing, constructing a paragraph, and word classifications, among others. Students engage with each of the structured topics and are required to submit their contributions aligned to each task and topic. Tutors provide feedback on student contributions in an asynchronous manner. The structured topics are aligned to specific formative assessment exercises, making use of the 'Tests and Quizzes' e-tool (mainly multiple-choice questions [MCQ]) question types. Tutors are expected to remind students about submission deadlines.

To ensure effective, interactive learning during the online portion of the class, instructors make use of Zoom Conferencing to conduct live lectures. Instructors send the Zoom invitations via iKamva's announcement e-tool. These regular communications are also linked to the students' email addresses. The teaching and learning processes of the course are task-based. Activities often involve writing, explanations, discussions, providing solutions, and feedback. Tutorial tasks are generally more involved than lectures because the tutor to student ratio is lower than the instructor to student ratio. The students were first familiarised with this new method of assessment. The tests were set up to allow students multiple chances to complete the test before the due date. The highest score is then recorded and retrieved. Students can attempt the test at any time, regardless of their geographical location.

Research Methods

Apart from the design of the blended course, this study is based on a survey that was given to a sample group from UWC's EED Law 101 course. Three lecture groups of first-year law students (who made up 38 tutorial groups in 2015, 2016, 2017) and who were taking other similar courses formed the subjects of the study. The course coordinator taught groups 1 and 2 while another lecturer taught group 3. Students met twice a week for lectures over 28 academic teaching weeks, and once weekly for tutorials (26 weeks). Subjects were full-time, residential, and non-residential students whose average age was 19 at the time of this study.

Lecture group 1 included 240 students, group 2 included 220 students, and group 3 had 60 students, although the overall student number at the beginning of the academic year was 605. All the lecture groups and tutorials were taught the same content during the course. In 2015, 2016, and 2017 the combined total number of students was 1652. CIECT were intimately involved, providing invaluable technical and practical expertise. The survey consisted of 12 questions as follows:

1. In what way did you make use of support given to you while writing the test?
2. How helpful is the online test? Explain.
3. Do you think it is a good idea to have online tests? Explain.
4. Do the questions provide you with clear directions on the assessment task/question?
5. How do you feel about your knowledge of the material now?
6. Was your mark very different in your multiple attempts to do well? If yes, explain.
7. In what ways would you suggest that we improve the online test? Explain fully.
8. Do you feel your contribution to the online test was important?
9. Do you feel that the online test gives you confidence in understanding and learning the sections of the work?
10. How could the online test be improved?
11. What was difficult about using the online test?
12. What have you 'taken' from the experience of using an online test in the rest of your writing/essay for the course?

The survey highlights some of the benefits and disadvantages of online tests in a large class context. Of the total students registered, 530 completed the questions. Questions were analysed in terms of their themes and categorised as accurately as possible. Qualitative and quantitative data are presented accordingly. Factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, political affiliation, religious or non-religious affiliation, and whether English is the students' first language were not considered in the analysis of student responses.

Data Analysis and Discussion

This section is devoted to an analysis of responses from the questionnaire. First the close-ended questions are analysed, followed by a thematic analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of online assessments in an EED Law 101 course at UWC, from the perspectives of the students themselves.

Analysis of close-ended questions

The questionnaire includes four close-ended questions. When students were asked if they think it is a good idea to have online tests in EED Law 101, all respondents responded positively. This is a clear indication that in the view of the respondents, having online tests is beneficial to them. Thus, including them in the syllabus is helpful.

In response to the statement about whether the questions provide them with clear directions on the assessment task or question, participants responded in the affirmative. Figure 6 shows the responses of the students.

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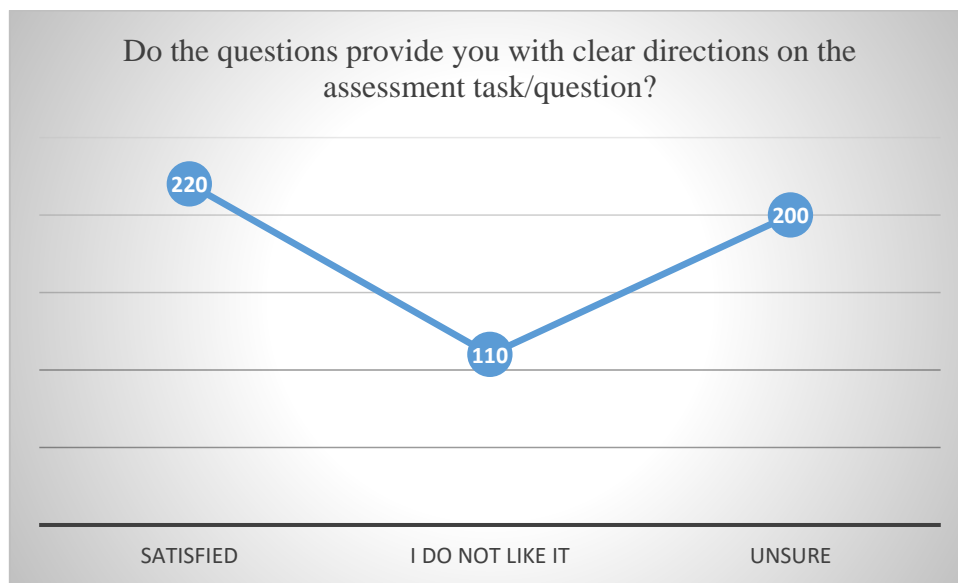
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Figure 6. Students' Attitudes Towards Assessment Directions

The responses indicate that students found the online test provided clear directions on the assessment task.

In a similar vein, 94.33% felt that their contribution to the online test was important, and only 5.6% indicated that they were unsure. Figure 7 outlines the responses of the students.
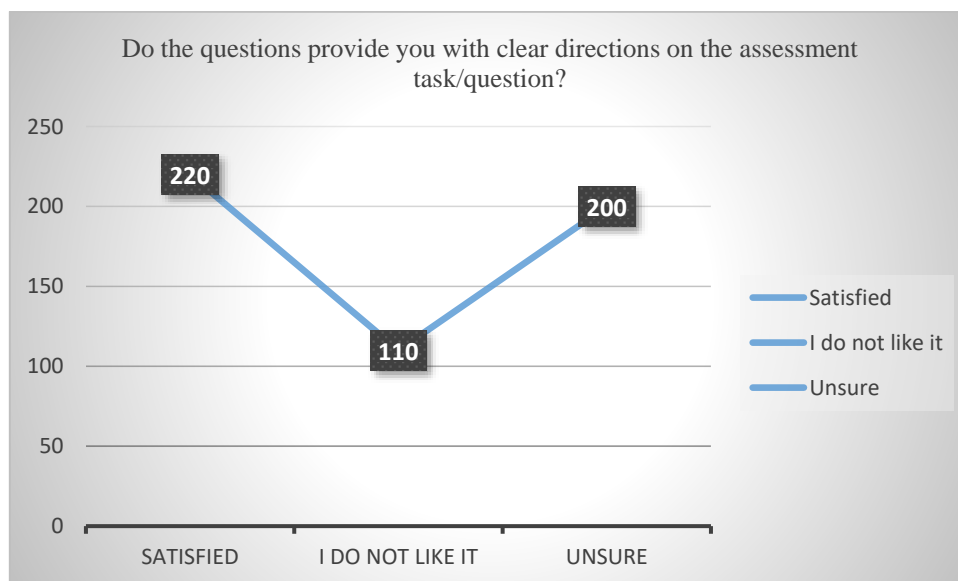

Figure 7. Students' Contribution to Online Tests

 Similarly, they answered 'yes' when asked whether the online test gave them confidence in understanding and learning the sections of the work, as is shown in Figure 8.

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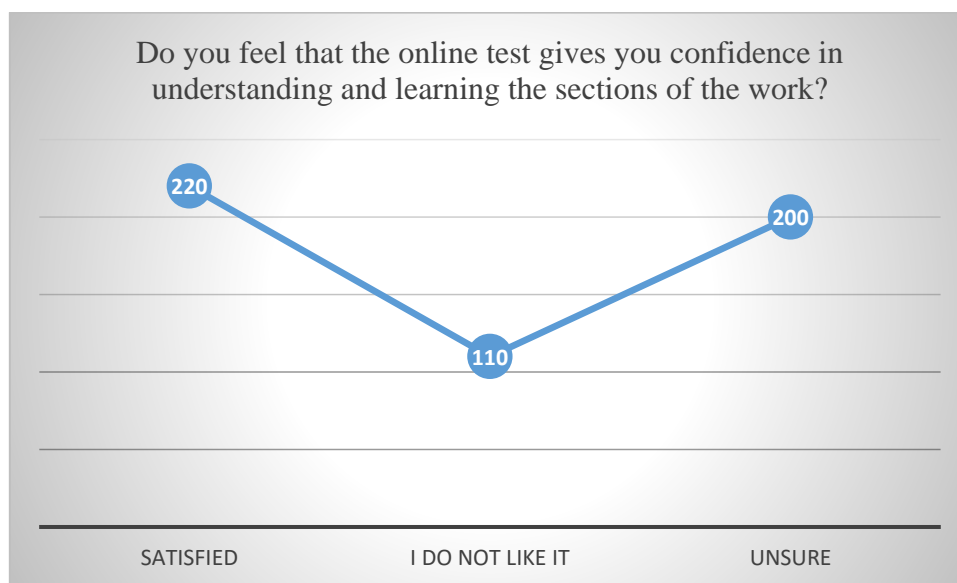
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Figure 8. Role of Online Tests in Understanding Relevant Content

In other words, students felt that the online test gave them confidence in terms of completing the final tasks, such as writing their final essay and other work for the course.

Analysis of open-ended questions

Insofar as the analysis of the open-ended questions is concerned, a thematic analysis of the findings was conducted. The following themes were identified through the responses submitted:

1. Use and helpfulness

The usefulness of online assessments was acknowledged by the respondents. In response to the question, "in what way did you make use of support given to you while writing the test?" All 530 responses were positive. Respondents indicated that the online test was beneficial to them. They used the online test to check the structure and content of their essays. The numerous questions gave them the opportunity to check and confirm if they completed all the necessary requirements, thus enabling them to correctly answer the test questions and submit quality essays. Other students stated that they used the online test to ensure that every text was sufficiently understood. Others reported that the online tests helped them to determine whether anything was missing. Students also responded by stating that they were able to demonstrate their understanding at their own pace when given the opportunity.

When asked to explain the helpfulness of the online test, positive responses came from all 530 students as well. The respondents confirmed that the online test was extremely helpful because it made them aware of the deficiencies in their understanding of the course content. Some students stated that the test allowed them to see what they missed from the required material. The findings of the study are in line with the findings of other studies that analysed the positive impact of e-assessments in undergraduate settings in other subjects, including studies from Sözen and Güven (2019) and Trang and Chi (2022).

In response to the question about any difficulties they encountered while using the online test, 530 respondents were of the view that nothing was difficult in using iKamva. This may be attributed to the user

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tips, intensive training, and help channels (e.g., https://bit.ly/3XhmP3h) provided by the CIECT for using the platform. Figure 9 shows some tips for engaging in online assessment (i.e., tests, exams, quizzes, and surveys) that was sent as an e-mail attachment to all students.

Figure 9. CIECT Tips for Engaging in Online Assessments.

This finding about the use of online tests is in contrary with those of some studies that were conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic such as Mahyoob (2020); Padayachee et al. (2018) and Al-Maqbali and Raja Hussain (2022) which reported a number of technical, academic, and communication challenges with e-assessments and the use of learning management systems.

2. Self-evaluation

In response to the question about how they feel about their knowledge of the materials after conducting the online tests, 20.75% of students stated that they were not satisfied, and 41.50% were unsure of rating their own work. Figure 10 summarizes the data.
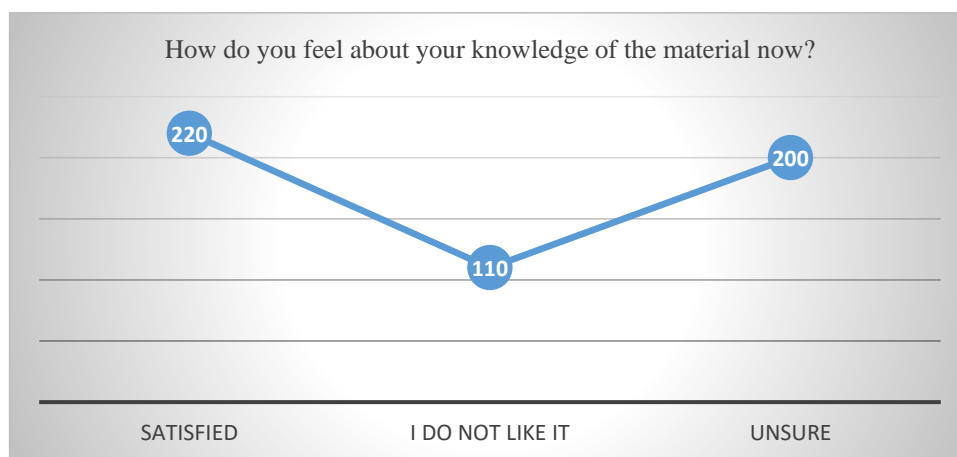
Figure 10. Students' Evaluation of their Knowledge of the Material

As the findings in Figure 10 show, 45% of the respondents indicated that they were fully satisfied with their knowledge of the materials after completing online tests. One student who expressed dissatisfaction specified the reason was because his mark was not final at the time of the survey. This could be interpreted to mean that the student felt forced to respond. Other respondents similarly indicated their dissatisfaction, stating, "my mark does not count, and it exposes me to the marker". This could imply that students may feel that if an examiner sees their mark, their scores may be adversely affected. This finding of the study is in conflict with many other studies (e.g. (Vanhoof et al., 2009; Janulevičienė & Kavaliauskienė, 2015; Mohammed, 2021) which found that students tend to value self-evaluations; they enhance self-confidence, motivation, and learning.

3. Improvement of online test (Question 10)

84.90% responded to Question 10 of the survey by stating that the online test is satisfactory in its current form. Statements such as, "I think it is okay as it is", "no need to improve it" and "[i]t is good as it is" were common. 15.09% of respondents left the question blank. However, when asked to explain their suggestions for improvement, 489 responded. A possibility for this trend in response to this question is that students may not have wanted to spend time thinking or explaining further, as they may feel that they do not have the necessary expertise, although they responded positively to participating in the process of constructing the online test. Furthermore, the responses were in most cases various iterations of, "the test is perfect as is." It is plausible that the students did not want to spend time explaining positive feedback or provide suggestions beyond a confirmation of the positivity, because these tasks were not requirements for the course grade. Some students may have felt that even though they were part of the process, ultimately the instructor has the final word. Nevertheless, the lack of serious engagement could also be that the students who were the majority of respondents were first year students at UWC at the time they completed the survey and were still adjusting to making independent suggestions instead of being provided with pre-determined alternatives. For instance, one student commented, "even though I like this and it helps it is all new to me because I am the student and the teacher must do this thing." It is also a possibility that students spend large amounts of their time communicating on social media and smartphones and may transfer the forms of communication often used on those platforms when asked to answer questions that require more thoughtful responses. Overall, students seemed convinced that the online test was not only good to use but integral for improving their performance on their essays.

4. Value of experience (Question 12)

Question 12 asks, "What have you 'taken' from the experience of using an online test in the rest of your writing/essay for the course?". The respondents indicated that using online tests is beneficial and requires them to check their work carefully before submitting, which helps to improve the quality of their essays. In terms of their takeaway experiences, they also stressed the importance of evaluating their own work using revision and reflection to ensure the quality of their final essays.

5. Importance for similar future tasks (Question 3)

When asked to explain whether it would be a good idea to have online tests, students all agreed that online tests are important for use in future and will also help develop their writing skills for argumentative essays. According to the students, online tests also serve as a reminder to comply with essay requirements, which for them may mean that they feel confident about their ability to produce good quality essays. The trend in this question was very similar to Question 9 in terms of reinforcing confidence.

6. Marks improvement

In response to the question about whether their marks were very different in their multiple attempts to complete the test, 450 out of 530 students responded positively. However, the respondents appeared reluctant to explain the differences in their various attempts. The findings of this study confirm those from similar studies that emphasized the pedagogical value of allowing multiple attempts for completing online assessments using LMS in various programmes, and their effect on total scores (Orchard, 2016; Wolkowitz, 2011).

7. Other advantages of online assessments
The thematic analysis of the responses from the questionnaire highlighted other advantages of online assessments, including:

1. Cost-effectiveness:
Many people have argued that online assessments are more cost-effective than offline, or in-person, written exams. Online assessments require less (or no) paper and fewer physical resources, especially if students have access to the internet and necessary devices. Students are spared the cost of things like transport, food, and other potential expenses beyond their own household needs.
2. Comfort:
The online mode is usually easier for both students and instructors. With an online setup, the students can complete tests from the comfort of their homes. This may reduce stress and save time. Online exams also benefit examiners, as they also save time by not having to prepare physical exam sheets.
3. Instant results:
In most cases, online assessments give instant results. At UWC assessments are generated online via iKamva. Beyond that, some online sites and applications include grading and evaluation capabilities. In some cases, after an assessment is completed, the grading of the tests is performed automatically. Online assessments have improved the assessment process, making it accessible, easy, and uncomplicated.
4. Large classes:
Online assessments can cater to large groups of students. Written, in-person assessments may have limited seating; online exams can accommodate significant numbers of people. This makes it easier for

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institutions to schedule their assessments.

Disadvantages/Limitations of online assessments

Apart from the advantages, the findings from the survey also identified some disadvantages of online assessments, as follows:

1. Technological limitations

Technical issues may arise with taking online assessments. First, there is the possibility that students may not have the technology and devices required to attend online classes and complete exams. Second, students and instructors may have internet connectivity issues. Students may have all the devices they require, but they cannot take online assessments without an internet connection. A strong, stable internet connection is not guaranteed for many students. The internet is still a luxury to millions of students globally. Another limitation is the fact that because of the large number of students who complete online tests, exporting individual test results may take time to download. Assessment results provided using programs with export options (for instance, in an Excel spreadsheet) gives details such as: response to all questions; number of submissions, and scores for each attempt. The CIECT team at UWC have been able to write a code that allows for 'only the highest score' to be recorded and retrieved for download. The results are thereafter entered or migrated into the institution's Marks Administrative System (MAS). Moreover, this study found that in the haste to introduce blended learning, many universities focused on bridging the educational distance between themselves and students. This resulted in the exclusion of some students, such as those with economic disadvantage, digital emigrants, and students with disabilities.

2. Issues with the mode of answering:

Typing is a skill honed through practice. Some students completing online assessments may lack sufficient typing skills. In the case of subjective or open-ended questions, the candidates must type long answers. This is not a practical method for those unskilled at typing, who may experience problems with time management and answering in general. The overall performance of the student could also be negatively affected. Thus, online assessments are not well-suited to subjective or open-ended answers that require long responses. A better option would be objective, multiple-choice, or one-word questions, which do not require as much typing.

3. Security in Online Assessments:

An important topic of debate when it comes to online assessments is the issue of security. To what extent do online exams ensure fair, equitable testing for all students? Problems such as cheating, fraud, plagiarism, and impersonation are among the many issues with in-person, written exams. These problems worsen in the online environment. Unless the educational institution takes extra precautions to install applications and procedures to ensure these problems do not take place, it is very likely to happen in the online environment. Similar challenges and disadvantages were reported in many studies, including (Aburumman, 2021; Olt, 2002; Yates & Beaudrie, 2009).

Conclusions

This paper proposed a model, based on educational theory, for learning components that can be used when designing online materials. The online platform mentioned in this study, iKamva, was used as an example for analysing student experiences in the online environment, from obtaining learning materials to when they are tested on required course content. Analysis of the data indicated both positive and negative elements, identified by the students, related to the outcomes of online testing. It is evident that online methods for testing are beneficial for large class contexts, as in the case of this study. It makes the learning and management thereof easier for both learners and educators and accommodates different learning styles.

This study has several limitations. It proposed a learning prototype for students enrolled in an ESP module for studying law, and it examined the attitudes of students who completed the course before the COVID-19 pandemic. Further studies may be conducted on students who took the course during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, to determine the extent to which their findings agree or conflict with the findings of this study. Additionally, the attitudes of students towards the online materials and assessments could be explored using technologies which measure eye movements and facial expressions. Further studies could also explore the attitudes of tutors and instructors towards blended course designs. The use of e-learning specifications in conjunction with LMS tools in the design of EED courses could also be explored. Finally, analysis of the use and impact of X-reality and gamification in EED contexts is also needed.

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Norina Braaf is an Instructional Designer at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) since 2007. Norina has a national diploma in multimedia and an advanced diploma (Honours) in adult education. Norina completed various short courses for professional development including eLearning in Practice, and Online Facilitation and Instructional Design. Norina's main responsibility as an Instructional Designer includes supporting staff and students at the university in the use of emerging technologies and pedagogies. Norina has contributed to various research activities and presented at several conferences. Norina is also involved in projects at UWC that revolve around the design, development, and implementation of various online modules (academic and support) on the Sakai Learning Management Platform.

Karin Chinnian is a senior lecturer in the Department of Criminal Justice and Procedure in the Law Faculty at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). After completing a BA(Law) and a LLB she pursued a LLM in human rights, and later completed a PhD, for which she conducted a feminist analysis of refugee law. In 2015, Karin was granted an Erasmus Mundus postgraduate scholarship at Ghent University. In 2020, Karin was awarded a *cum laude* postgraduate diploma in higher education (teaching and learning). In 2022 she completed her Teaching Advancement at Universities (TAU) Fellowship. Karin's research focuses on human rights and gender and has advised several NGOs working on gender and violence, human rights, and social justice. Karin also researches teaching and learning in the discipline of law.

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