Higher Education Teaching Project

Melanie Shotter

Exploring the use of workshops to encourage educators to use online learning platforms.

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Abstract: This study investigates, through a quantitative research design, the effect of an intervention workshop applied to tertiary educators who appeared to underutilize an advantageous online educational learning platform. In order to bring about this investigation, an anonymous cross-sectional survey was administrated to 15 educators to determine the amount of usage, underutilization and possible causes for such. Through a confidence level of 95%, with a Margin of Error of plus/minus 5%, results from this data received showed that an intervention workshop can be implemented to arouse an encouraged use of the online learning platform (Smith, 2013). These results are reflected through statistical representation of graphs, charts and diagrams in this research article.

1. Introduction and Context

1.1. Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to explore how an intervention workshop can encourage educators to engage with a predesigned online learning platform to enhance the learning experience of tertiary students and in so doing bring about an understanding of how certain methods could be used to enhance the utilisation of encouraged learning systems as a whole.

1.2. Background

McKnight (2012) states that technology has drastically changed the teaching and learning process. Twenty-first century students have an expanding world-wide audience which has moved to a peer-based environment, via online leaning. Tertiary students comprise mostly of the *net* generation and technology can be described as an integrated part of their social and mental lives (Oblinger and Onlinger, 2005). This generation is more inclined to conduct electronic research on virtual data-bases as opposed to seeking reference from physical books (NISO, 2012, p. 9). Therefore, there needs to be a dedication toward this technological shift to ensure that this virtual environment is catered for (Tucker and Stronge, 2005).

Afshari, Baker, Luan, Samahaa and Fooi (2009, p. 96) propose that integrating technology into tertiary environments can be challenging and educators require knowledge, skill and attitude to implement this successfully. Christie and Jurado ([s.a]) incorporated a study to observe the extent at which educators made use of online platforms and tried to discover reasons for underutilisation. Their study addresses the need for a larger cooperation to exist between stakeholders

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implementing courses and educators, and state that it would be counterproductive to put courses online without providing sufficient support to educators and students. From an institutional point, Rother (2016) states that slow progress has occurred in transferring technology to the pedagogy, and teaching and learning has not evolved rapidly enough to meet institutional technology upgrades.

Technology can revolutionise educational practises, but most educators feel threatened by this change, fearing unemployment (Rother, 2016). What educators fail to realise is that they still need to show the linking of information and knowledge, while providing explanation and feedback (Miller, 2015). On the contrary, with economic aspects like riots (#feesmustfall campaign) where higher education comes to a standstill, the population of online classes are growing, requiring more online support from educators (Davis, 2016).

2. <u>Problem Statement</u>

2.1. Justification

In order to justify why this research study should be conducted, an outline is provided on how beneficial online learning platforms can be and how this can contribute to student learning success. Online learning platforms allow for convenience, flexibility and are designed to improve the education experience (*Blackboard,* [s.a]) (Aspillera, 2010). Online learning platforms have the technological capacity to help students succeed and increase student empowerment as it allows for control over their own academic progress and material (Aspillera, 2010). It allows for continuous teaching and learning to occur, meaning that a learning environment can always be possible (a virtual space), even in the event of riots, which reveals the social economic and political advantages thereof (Mabasa, 2016).

Despite all these advantages, there was still a large portion of educators (78%) not engaging. Statistics presented show that even though an institution had implemented an online learning platform, designed to assist educators in operating, issuing and facilitating learning activities (class tasks and the marking thereof, research activities, available slides, announcements etc.), a large number of educators were still not making use of this platform (VCLearn Analytical Campus Report, 2016).

At a campus level only 20 hours and 57 minutes were logged per educator for 2016. Out of 1834, 34 hours recorded for 8 campuses across all active modules, 22% of those hours were logged by

educators on that particular campus (Analytical Campus Report, 2016, p. 7). Therefore, this platform was used for 40 minutes per week from 100 educators. In 2015, 9 minutes per week were utilised on this platform (Stats, 2015, p11). Although there was a significant increase in usage from 2015, it appears that there was not enough interest in making use of the platform (Analytical Campus Report, 2016, p. 3).

2.2. Research Questions

The following research questions guided the researcher in the right direction and allowed for a combination of the main recourses to be synthesised to bring about directed and concluded questions (Duke University, 2014, p.1).

- *In what way, can a teaching intervention, such as a workshop be used to encourage enhanced engagement in the use of the online learning platform, by educators?*

- *Does exposure of the features of the online learning platform, via the means of a workshop, encourage educators to use the tool more effectively, and if so in what way?*

2.3. Research Objectives

The main objective of this research study is to provide an intervention (workshop) to encourage the use of the online learning platform. In addition, the research objective is to provide educators with sufficient understanding of the scope of the online learning platform to assist them in using the online tool to encourage student engagement, which relates back to the purpose of the study (Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014, p. 248).

3. Literature Review

3.1. Theoretical Framework

This literature review incorporates a rich collection of research done, based on previously published methods, to explore the success of workshops to encourage respondents and create a successful intervention. According to Steinburg (2013) the effectiveness and popularity of using online educational tools is moving at a rapid pace, worldwide. The author adds that a recent

survey showed that at least one in five undergraduates have engaged with an online learning platform. Related to this, Hamby (2009) states that the focus of a workshop is to allow respondents to apply work on a programme, with the intention that they will have a foundation of knowledge in place to address challenges in future.

The study by Yost, Ciliska and Dobbins (2014) showed how educational workshops increased informed decision making, knowledge, skills and behaviours; proving that workshops can act as a successful intervention tactic. According to the study conducted by Hood and Neuman (2013), workshop respondents had an increased self-efficiency and better attitude toward the research topic. Green, O'Connor, McKenzie, Francis, Michie, Buchbinder, Schattner, Spike and Grimshaw (2012), conducted a study where two workshops were used to implement a four-step intervention in order to assess the mechanism of behaviour change. The strengths of this study showed that the four-step intervention method can be used as a guide for interventions; moving from 'target behaviours, to theoretical domains, to conducting changes and then for the full intervention implementation'. By imposing this method, researchers were able to investigate clear mechanisms of change (Green *et al,* 2012).

Another research study which recorded the successfulness of educational workshops, was done by Windt, Windt, Davis, Petrella and Khan (2015) who reported how a workshop was provided to 25 respondents (physicians), to determine whether they could be persuaded to prescribe physical activity as a form of medicine. The results showed a 28% increase, 4 weeks after the workshop intervention. Research done by Ko, Wallhead and Ward (2006, p. 399) revealed an effective intervention. Within this workshop the educators were asked to apply knowledge through active-learning in the form of problem-solving tasks which spoke to the student-centred approach. The workshop ended by focusing on reflection-based group discussion (instructional practises) and also spoke to possible issues around implementation which was then addressed by the facilitator (Ko *et al,* 2006, p. 399).

3.2.   Key Definitions

3.2.1.   According to Hamby (2009), w*orkshops* can be described as a smaller group of individuals who are given the opportunity to practise skills under supervision. Additionally, Manning and Binzagr (1996, p. 272) speak of *participant design workshops* which cater for individuals to plan future systems which allows them to take responsibility for carrying themselves out.

3.2.2.   When referring to online education aspects such as an *online learning platform*, this describes teaching and learning approaches that are facilitated and reinforced by technology use (UCL, 2016). This includes accessing teaching resources and activities online, online communication and assessment. UCL (2016) describes the main benefit of e-learning as providing further opportunity for dialogue to students and educators which enhances the learning experience.

4. Research Methodology

4.1.   Worldview

The paradigm relating to this research is *critical realism* which encompasses a sense of empowerment toward the respondents through research. Critical realism exposes myths (like use of online platforms in teaching curriculums are not needed) and incorporates a self-transformation (Baskhar, 2010). From an epistemological point of view, the main aim of this research is to enlighten educators with the knowledge on how to conveniently make use of online learning platforms. Critical realism from a metatheoretical perspective creates an opportunity to critique the current lecturing style and expose limitations in order for educators to observe how enriched their teaching style can become by adopting this platform. As this study aims to improve the standard of teaching, it therefore promotes equality and emancipation of any prejudice; this study is not aimed at gender, race or religion (du Plooy-Cilliers*et al,* 2014, p. 34-35).

4.2.   Quantitative Methodology

A quantitative research design is used to explain the numerical observations of this study (Sukamolson, [s.a], p. 2). The reason quantitative research was selected is because of the type of research questions being asked; it seeks the breadth of the research rather than the depth. Numerical data was collected using a survey (Balnaves and Caputi, 2001, p. 1-9).

This study has a descriptive research aim (Hopkins, 2008), as it is in a narrative form and is presented through text describing the intervention through the relationship of variables systematically (du-Plooy-Cilliers*et al,* 2014. p. 76). The data has been organised into tables, diagrams, pie charts and graphs due to the nature of the data's numerical status (Regoniel, 2015).

4.3.   Survey Design

The survey design is *cross-sectional* which allows for analysis of the collected data from a population at a specific point in time (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al*, 2014, p. 146). A cross-sectional survey implies an observational study where the researcher did not interfere with the learning but observed how the target population grasped certain aspects or, as in this case, was enlightened to the platform features (CSRO, 2015).

This study is aimed at conducting research through non-experimental quantitative research survey designs, as no variables in this study was manipulated, and was studied as they appeared. It is important that manipulation does not occur as this could have affected the attention to detail of this study as well as the quantitative and statistical effects (Office of Research Integrity, 2011) which could have resulted in inconsistent results (Belli, 2008, p. 60). As no manipulation of the data occurred, the results of this study are therefore consistent throughout.

4.4. Data Collection Method

The data was collected through surveys using a questionnaire. The type of survey questions included closed-ended (selecting an option for a possible answer) as well as open-ended (allows respondents to answer questions in their own words for a broader understanding) (Farrell, 2016). The reason both close-ended and open-ended questions were selected for this research study was because it allowed the educators to partially self-expose the advantages of this online learning platform and to realise that they were not taking full advantage of these benefits (Farrell, 2016).

This questionnaire has an introduction explaining the purpose of the survey and assures respondents that it is confidential. It provides an estimated duration for completion, with clear and concise instructions and ends by thanking respondents for their involvement (du-Plooy-Cilliers *et al*, 2014. P. 152). This questionnaire is standardised which increases the reliability of the study as all of the respondents were asked the same questions in the same format and all received the same questionnaire (Boynton & Greenhalgh, 2004). This questionnaire was designed for the respondents to answer the questions on the questionnaire provided and therefore allowed for self-administration (Siniscalco and Aurial, 2014, p. 2).

4.5. Data Analysis Method

In terms of analysing the data received from the questionnaire, a combination of descriptive statistics, graphs and nonparametric methods were used (Students.shu, 2008, p. 6). The system which was used to process, analyse and represent the data collected was an Office programme called Windows Spreadsheets. The summary of the data was inputted onto spreadsheets, where pivot and spreadsheet tables and graphs visually represented the data.

5. Population and Sampling methods
5.1. Population

According to Hassan (2015, p. 1) a population can be described as the main scientific focus. The population is usually comprised of a group of individuals who have similar characteristics in common. Additionally, du Plooy-Cilliers *et al* (2014, p. 132) refer to this as the group of individuals from whom the research will require data. Therefore, the research population is the educators who did not make use of the higher educational online learning platform.

There are two types of populations which have been considered for this study; the *target population* (the entire group of individuals the research is aimed at) and the *accessible population* (the section of the target population)*.* The *target population* is the educators of the institution. The *accessible population* is a small group of individuals, as the focus will be on educators who did not make use of the online platform.

The parameter (common characteristics) of this population are that they all have similar professions, they all have a tertiary qualification and these certain educators did not make use of an online learning platform to assist them with teaching and learning (Redfern, 2011).

5.2. Sample Method

Sampling can be describing as a method of choosing individuals who will be appropriate respondents to take part in the research study (McLeod, 2014). Because the target population is small (making the research sample less confident) sampling bias (where the sample does not meet the characteristics of the population) was at risk of occurring. For the purposes of this study the respondents have, therefore been chosen according to Probability Sampling (Cluster Random Sampling). This sampling involves choosing respondents from different groups within the population (Jackson, 2016). This sampling method was selected because respondents will need to be chosen randomly as the research available does not list individual non-users of the online

learning platform. Because the report reveals a lesser usage percentage overall, it was assumed that any educator chosen could be seen as possibly benefiting from further usage of the online learning platform. In addition, the sampling was convenient because of the accessibility of the subjects to the researcher. The educators are on the campus daily.

5.3.   Sample size

There are 100 educators (population size) and 60% of them lecturing modules made available on the online platform. There is a confidence level of 95% (the confidence of the research that the mean falls within the confidence interval) with a Margin of Error of +/- 5% (the allowance of error within the sample) (Smith, 2013). This information was inputting into a sample size calculator and the calculation was made to 19.7 (Creative Research Systems, 2012). Although 20 educators volunteered to participate in the research, only 75% of the target population followed through with participation.

6. Feasibility

According to the study conducted by Mukund (2012) this study is *technically feasible* as there were sufficient computers available at the tertiary institution, to conduct the intervention workshop all with a direct link to the online learning platform. It is *economically feasible* as there were no cost implications for this research project. It is *legally feasible* as it did not violate any laws. It is *operationally feasible* as this study fulfils the operation and educational desire to increase usage of the online learning platform via the means of a hands-on intervention workshop. This study is also *scheduling feasible* as it had a specific laid out schedule which helped guide the researcher to ensure deadlines are met.

7. Ethical Considerations, Validity and Reliability

Regarding the ethical considerations, anonymity is the main aim of this study to ensure the respondent's individual contribution. With regards to the intervention workshop, an invitation was sent to the target population, which included an invitation to all other educators. In this way the respondent's participation could remain anonymous throughout the implementation of this

research study. The data collected was done so anonymously and confidentially (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al,* 2014, p. 291). Request for the questionnaire participation was done so on a personal basis, inviting respondents to complete the survey directly after the intervention workshop had been conducted. From the responses received, validity could be assured by asserting that this data does reflect the occurrence that this research study claims to bring about (Sagor, 2000). All ethical aspects of this research were achieved more effectively due to an aspect of transparency being maintained throughout the intervention. By ensuring that this target population understood why this research was being conducted, and by being open and honest about the study, ensured positive results (Sagor, 2000).

8. Study Limitations

Although this intervention workshop was successfully implemented, the application process was timely. Time in terms of the dedication toward ensuring the respondents understood the aspects and the features of the platform during the workshop, the preparation in ensuring the platform research was conducted, the compilation of the respondent notes and data required for the workshop etc. There was also a level of uncertainty associated to the intervention. Uncertainty in terms of whether the respondents attending the workshop would have the basic skills required to participate, attempting to fit all the training in a single workshop session, trying to attend to each respondents within the training, whether the computer laboratories would be available for the workshop at the required time as requested, the computers were securely and efficiently running to ensure engagement in the learning, that no interruptions occurred and ensuring that ultimately the intervention takes root (Stanford University Libraries, 1997).

9. Results and Discussions of Findings

The following question will represent the results received from the survey and collaborate these with a discussion of the findings derived from the results. There will be a depiction of the results for each question which will be displayed in accordance so as to link the findings to the results received.

9.1.   Usage

Question 1 asked respondents to indicate how often they make use of the online platform.

The findings represented in figure 9.1 reveal a limited amount of usage, despite the online platform being active since 2015. Most of the respondents (67% of the target population) had below 50% usage while 33% had more than 50% of usage recorded.
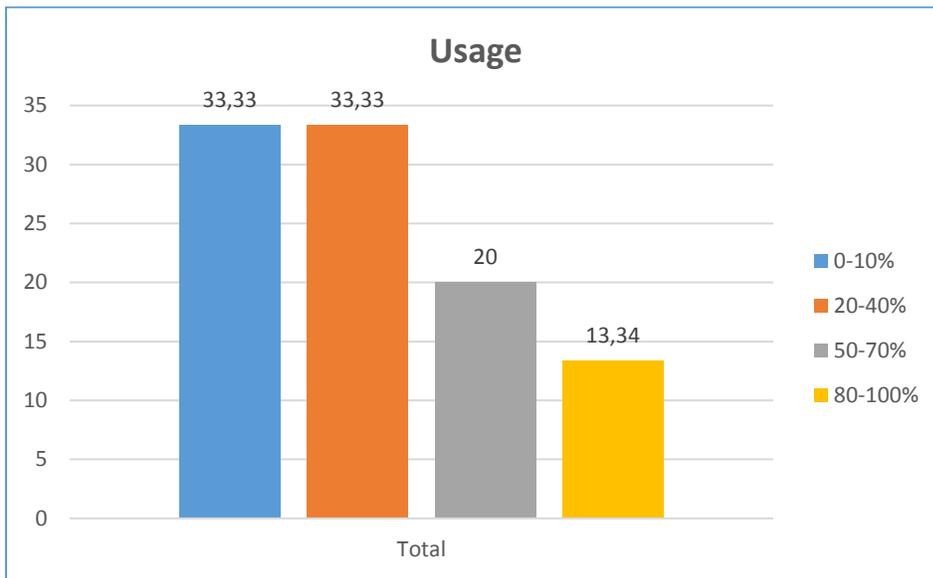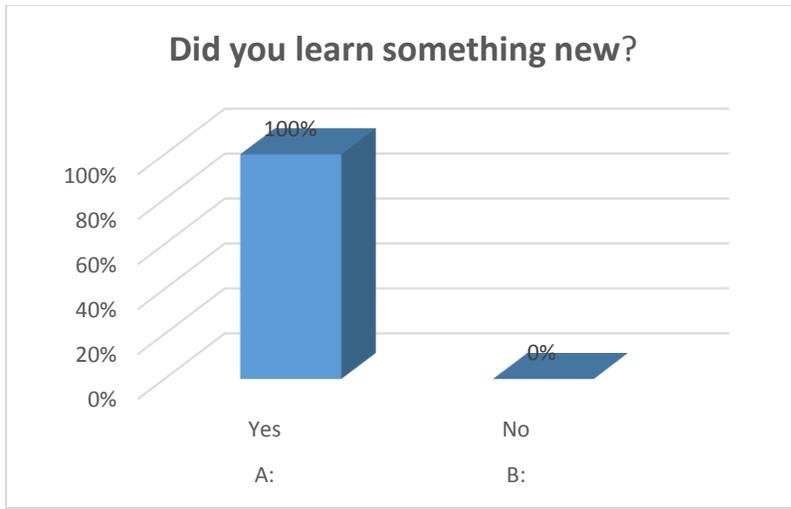

Figure 9.1: Usage representation.

The implications from these findings might depict that lecturers feel intimidated by technology, associate a sense of frustration in attempting to use it, struggle to grasp the basic functions and view this as a distraction for students. This supports the view of Baek (2006) who explained that technology is not always embraced by educators due to the frustration experienced in operating it, comfortability with lecturing rhythm and the fear of disruption and change.

9.2. Feature reveal

Question 2 enquires whether the intervention workshop could reveal features of the online platform, which respondents might not know existed.
The findings from figure 9.2 reveal that the intervention workshop could show all the respondents involved (100%) a feature they did not know existed on the online platform.

Figure 9.2: Feature reveal representation.

These findings reveal that through interactive workshops, respondent activity and knowledge can be enhanced. This is supported by the study conducted by Davis, O'Brein, Freemantle, Fredric, Wolf, Mazmanian and Taylor- Vaisey (1999, p. 867) who state that effective workshops can bring about an enhanced sense interaction which can lead to knowledge creation.

9.3. Features

Question 3 requests respondents to elaborate on their answer from question 2 and describe the features learned in the workshop.

The largest representation (53.33%) attributes to a link which navigates to another online administrative space, 26.33% and 6.33% of these suggestions attribute to features on the platform itself, while 13.33% contribute to another link which allows educators to raise concerns.
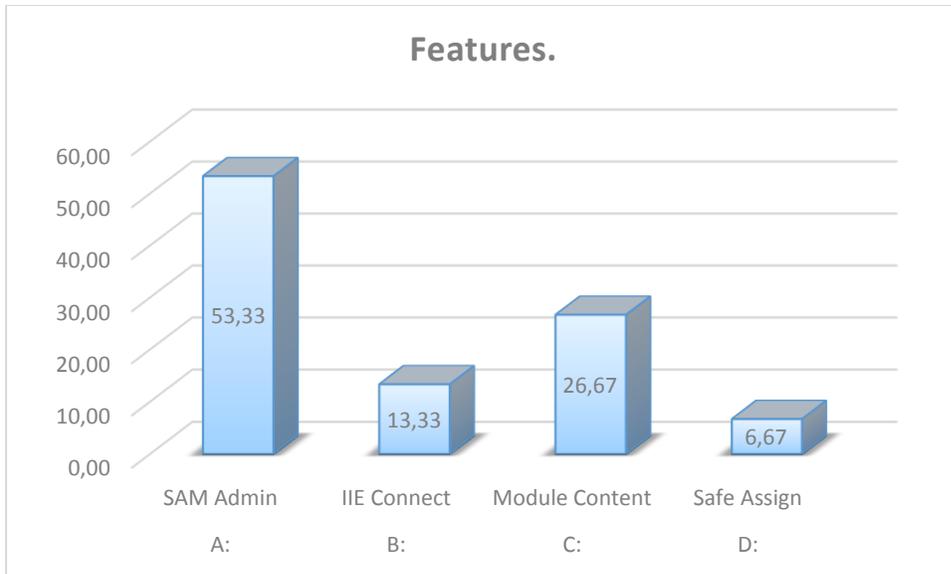
Figure 9.3: Features representation.

The implications of these findings in figure 9.3 might be due to a technological comfort zone. This is supported by the views of the American Press (2016) who state that individuals prefer to use a platform most commonly associated to existing platforms, in terms of format and style. This, therefore could explain why the external links were not previously explored.

9.4.   Workshop recommendation

Question 4 asked respondents whether they, if they heard of a colleague struggling with the online platform, would recommend the colleague to attend a similar workshop.

Figure 9.4 reveals that 100% of the respondents would recommend this workshop to a colleague.
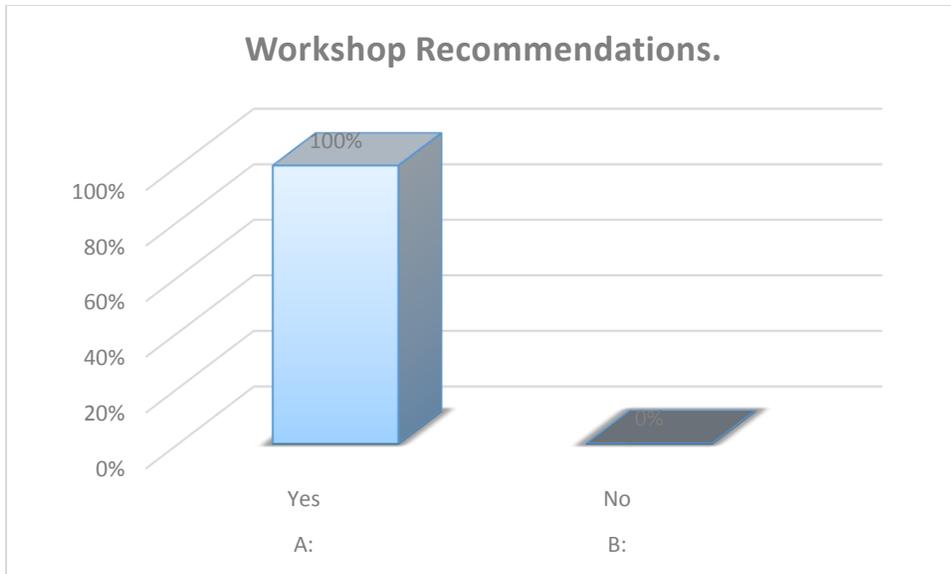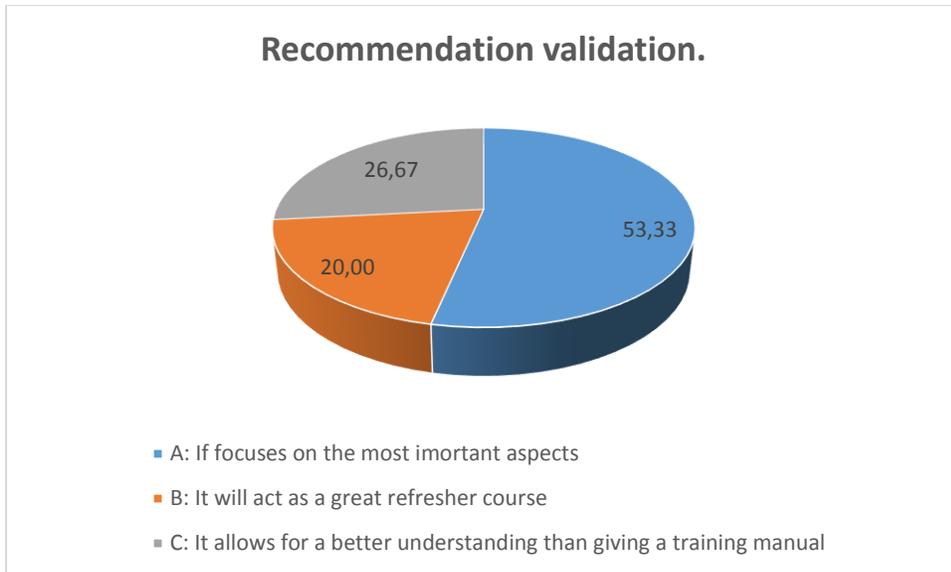
Figure 9.4: Workshop recommendation representation.

The implications of figure 9.4 reveal either that an aspect of learning took place enough to provide a reference to another person who requires knowledge or it implies that it would serve as a convenient method of reference for a colleague in need. This is supported by the study conducted by Ingram (2007) who states that individuals provide recommendations depending on the mood they were in during the interaction, the effectiveness of the service, or to be helpful and provide a solution to a person in need (Ingram, 2007).

9.5. Recommendation validation

Question 5 requests respondents to elaborate on their answer to question 4.

Figure 9.5. reveals the reason why a respondent would recommend this intervention workshop to a colleague with 53.3% implying that it reveals the important aspects of the online platform, 26.67% implied that it could be utilised as a 'refresher course' to employees who needed to update their platform knowledge, and 20% implied that the intervention workshop was better than simply being given a training manual.

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Recommendation validation.

- A: If focuses on the most imortant aspects
- B: It will act as a great refresher course
- C: It allows for a better understanding than giving a training manual

Figure 9.5: Recommendation validation representation.

The reason most respondents implied that the workshop focused on the most important aspects of the online platform could reveal that respondents knew what the important aspects were prior to attending the workshops but have never had the opportunity to implement them and in so doing putting their knowledge into practise. This view is supported by Wilson (2016) who states that anxiety of attending events can be minimised when an aspect of understanding is applied to the topic through prior research, to be somewhat prepared and to allow for comfortability.

9.6. Online learning platform benefits

Question 6 askes respondents if they felt an increased use of the features of the online learning platform will benefit students, in terms of overall teaching and learning.

Figure 9.6 reveals that most respondents believe that the benefits of the online learning platform could assist their students (80%), while some (20%) indicated it could partially assist.
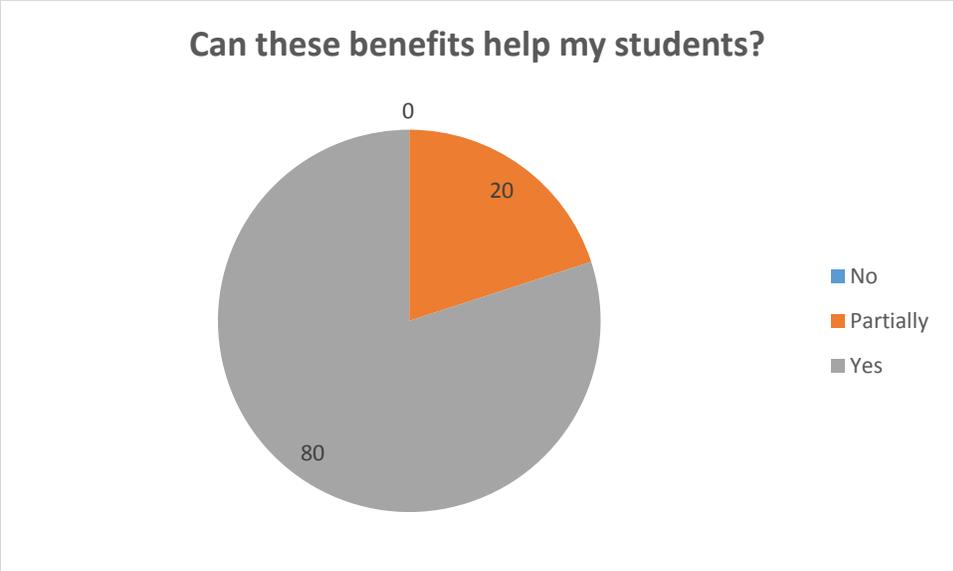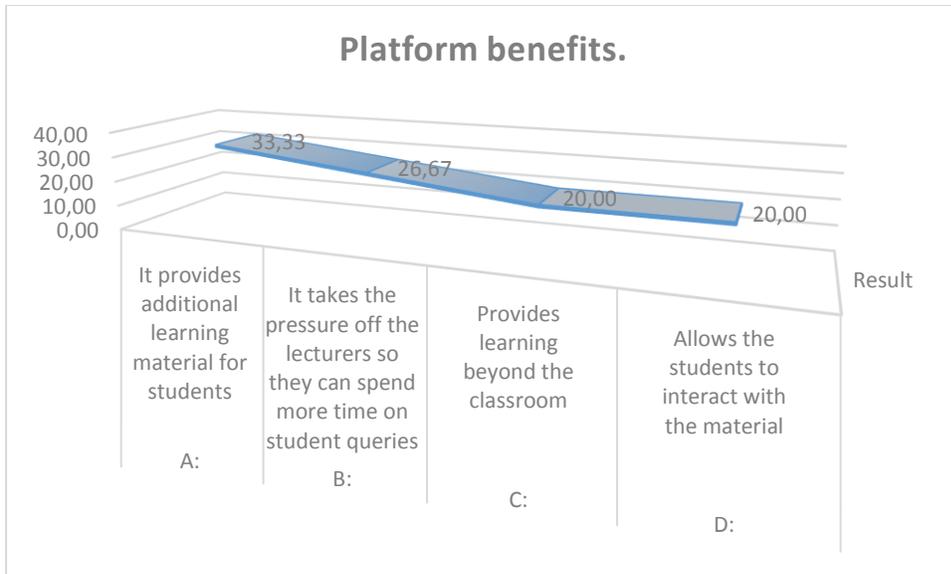
Figure 9.6. Platform benefits.

The reason respondents might be inclined to say yes could be due to the number of features highlighted in the workshop which link to the general goals of educators. Such features and general educator goals include ones depicted by Oxford University Press (2015); spreading the learning past the classroom environment, allowing for a record keeping of their progress and progression at a comfortable pace.

9.7. Benefit validation

Question 7 askes respondents to elaborate on their answer to question 6.

Figure 9.7 reveals the reasons why respondents might feel the online learning platform would benefit their students with the highest amount (33.33%) believing the online learning platform will provide additional learning material for students. Some respondents (26.67%) divulged that it could take pressure off the lecturers, while 20% acknowledged that it provided learning beyond the classroom and will allow students to interact with the material.

Platform benefits.

|	
A: It provides additional learning material for students	33,33
B: It takes the pressure off the lecturers so they can spend more time on student queries	26,67
C: Provides learning beyond the classroom	20,00
D: Allows the students to interact with the material	20,00

Figure 9.7: Platform benefit validation.

From the above reasons provided, it can be suggested that these outlined benefits will be more beneficial for the respondents themselves. This supports the view of the Oxford University Press (2015) who state that students can be convinced of the benefits if the educators can be convinced.

9.8. Workshop interaction

Question 8 asks respondents if the workshop allowed for sufficient interaction with the online platform, to experience the functions.

Figure 9.8 reveals that 100% of the respondents felt sufficient interaction opportunity was given to interact with the online learning platform.

Workshop Interaction?
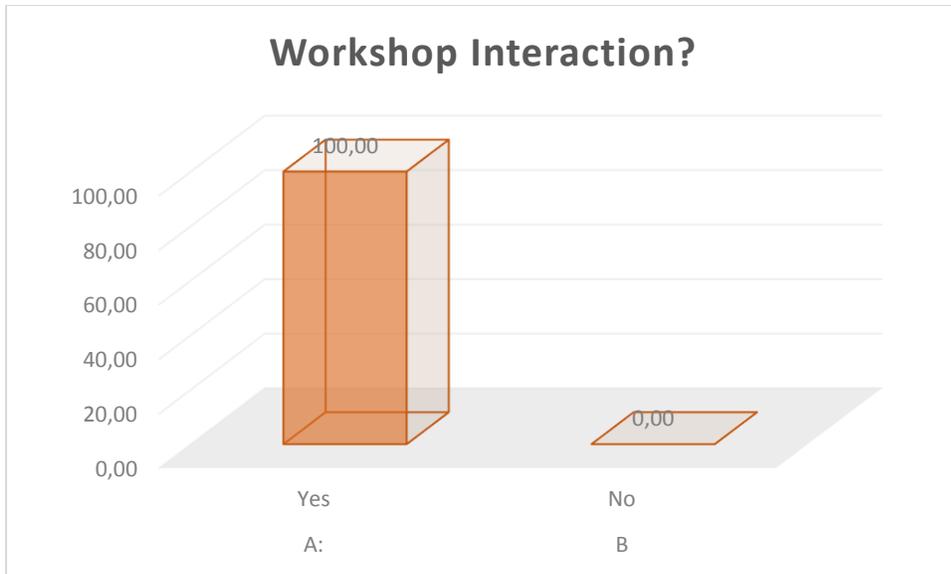
Figure 9.8: Workshop interaction.

From the results depicted in the graph in figure 9.8 a conclusion can be made that sufficient engagement opportunity was given to the respondents within this workshop and their willingness to participate shows a percentage of interest in topic discussed. This conclusion is supported by the view of Weimer (2011) who states that participation in a learning environment promotes interest and allows practise of the newly acquired skills.

9.9.   Instructions

Question 9 asks the respondents if the workshop was presented in such a way that it allowed them to easily follow the instructions to engage interactively with the functions of the online platform.

Figure 9.9 reveals information as to whether respondents could follow the instructions of the workshops. Most of the respondents (86.67%) said that they were easily able to follow instructions, 13.33% of the respondents implied they were mostly able to follow the instruction and no respondents indicated that they were slightly able to or not able to follow instructions.
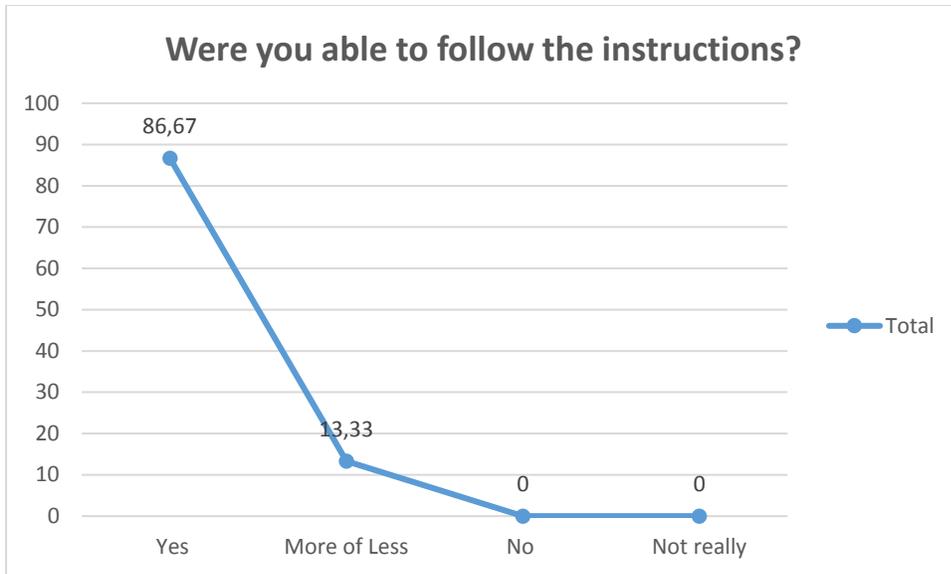
Figure 9.9. Following instructions.

From this indication, a conclusion can be deduced that the instructions laid out in the workshop were easy to follow. This supports Dartnell's (2017) view who states that it is important that instructions are clear as assumptions and mixed messages could result in the message being different from what the sender means and thus resulting in the instructions not being followed.

9.10. New or old curriculum

Question 10 requests respondents to indicate whether they, if a choice was presented, would revert to the curriculum where use of the online learning platform was not required.

Figure 9.10 depicts how most of the respondents (66.67%) indicated 'no', 33.33% of the respondents indicated a possibility of choosing the old curriculum while no respondents indicated they would revert.
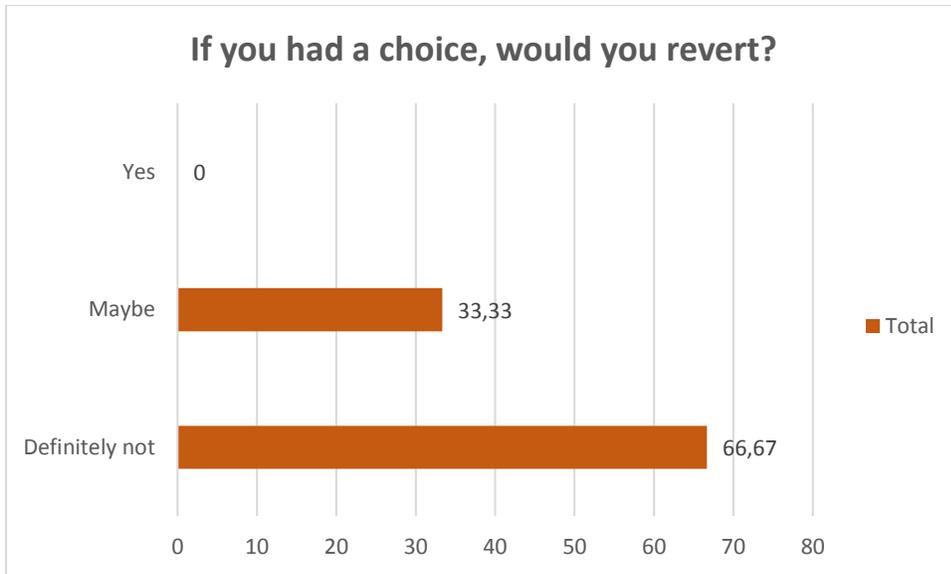
Figure 9.10: How lecturers really feel about the change.

Figure 9.10 reveals that respondents would not like to revert to the old curriculum. This falls in line with the view of the Oxford University Press (2015) who state that giving individuals a choice about their learning can assist in academically developing.

9.11. Benefits

Question 11 asks respondents how they would describe the learning platform after the workshop had taken place.

Figure 9.11 reveals that most of the respondents (93.33%) could see the benefits after the workshop while 6.67% of the respondents indicated that they could see the benefits but still did not want to use it.

Can you see the benefits?

0

6,67

I can see the benafit

I cannot see the benafit

I see the advantages but still don't want to use it

93,33
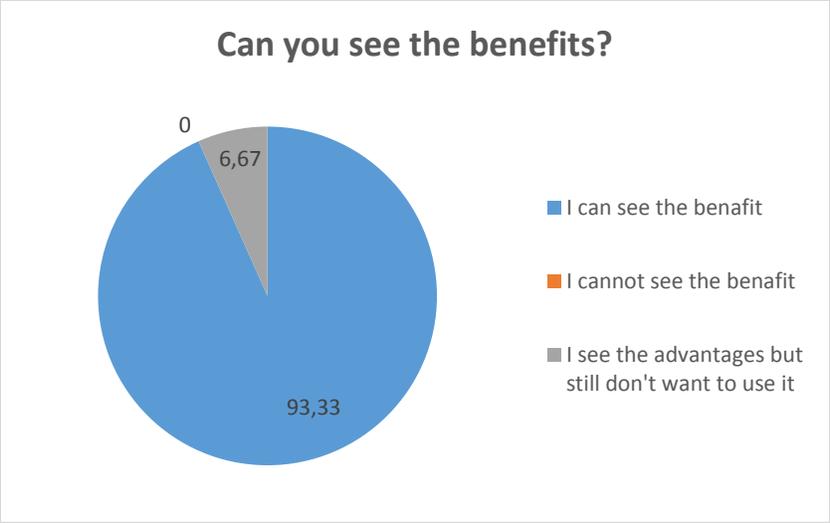
Figure 9.11: Benefits.

Figure 9.11 reveals the possibility that the workshop highlighted the benefits of the learning platform. This suggests that the respondents do see the outlined advantages and how these can benefit their students. This supports the view of the Oxford University Press (2015) who states that individuals who display understanding and who can show reasoning within their understanding can decide for themselves what they regard as being advantageous or not.

9.12. Training material

Question 12 asks respondents whether they could follow the training material.

Figure 9.12 reveals that most of the respondents (93.33%) indicated 'yes', while 6.67% indicated that they could 'partially' see the benefits.
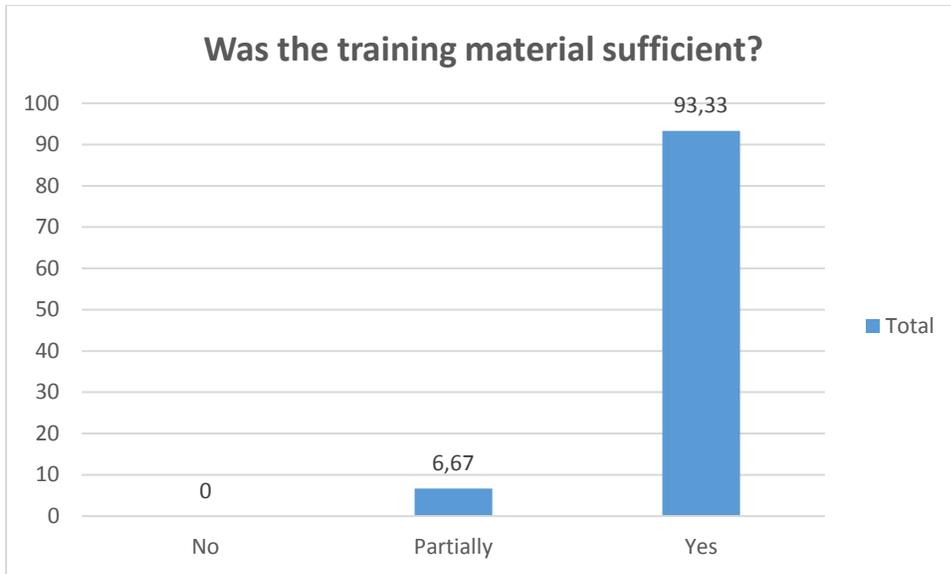
Figure 9.12: Training material representation.

Figure 9.12 shows that the training material was easy to follow and assisted in the learning process of the features of the online learning platform. This conclusion is supported by the study of Theall, Bruff and Gross (2017) who state that material content is vital for effective learning from an instructional dimension and therefore, ineffective material could result in respondents not seeing the benefits of the platform due to not understanding the elements involved to engage effectively.

9.13. Reference

Question 13 asks respondents whether they would keep the training material to consult with in future.

Figure 9.13 reveals that 100% of the respondents would keep the training material.
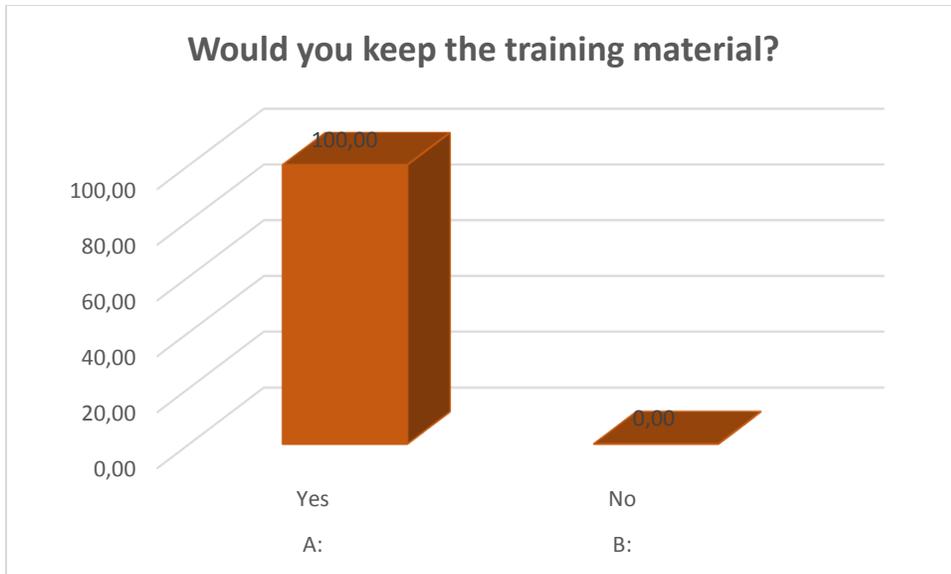
Figure 9.13: Training material for future reference.

This graph in figure 9.13 reveals that respondents have the intention of keeping the material for future reference. This implies that the training material implied a level of self-direction, was goal and task orientated and was relevant. This is supported by the view of Dalto (2014) who describes necessary principles for effective training material as evoking self-direction and goal creation.

9.14. Training material improvement

Question 14 asks respondents whether they thought any improvements to the training material were required.

Figure 9.14 reveals that most respondents (46.67%) felt that no improvements were necessary. Some respondents (33.33%) felt an electronic copy should be made available. Some (13.33%) suggested that the material should have a table of context for easy reference, while others (6.67%) suggested that the training material have a place to make notes.
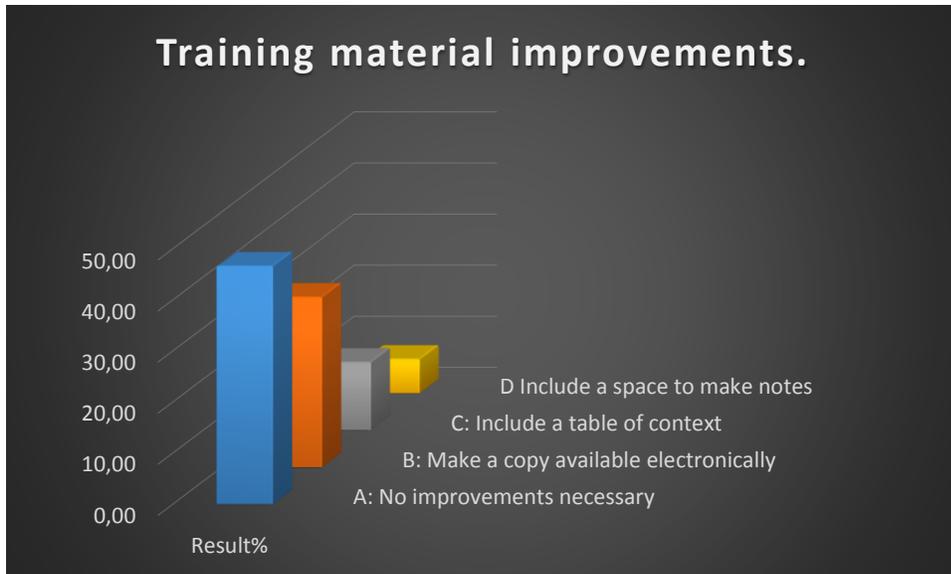
Figure 9.14: Training material improvement representation.

Figure 9.14 reveals information based possibly on the respondent's workshop goals, training material frustrations and an attempt to offer guidance toward improvements. This supports the view stated by Leadershipfreak (2013) who states improvements are a necessary addition which allows for growth, to illuminate frustration and assist in preforming optimally.

9.15. Teaching and learning

Question 15 asks respondents if the workshop successfully provided information on the benefits of the online platform and how this could be of use to overall teaching and learning.

 The information in figure 9.15 depicts that most respondents (93.33%) felt that the workshop was able to provide them with information on the benefits of the online platform and that this can assist with the overall teaching and learning process. A total of 6.67% of the respondents felt that the workshop partially did this.
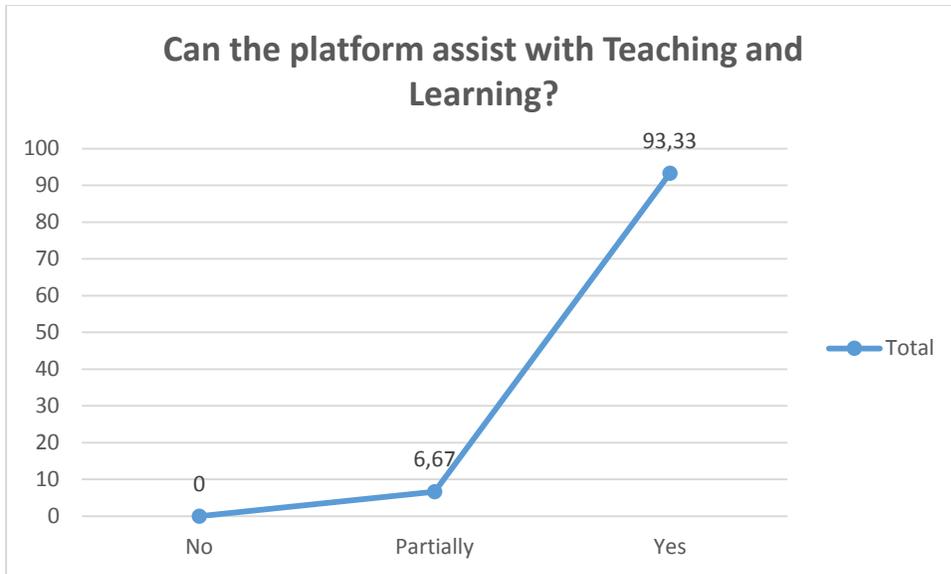
Figure 9.15. Teaching and learning representation.

The information depicted in figure 9.15 shows that the workshop revealed aspects which appealed to the respondent's ability to assist students (occupational goal) and therefore this appealed to them on a level they could relate to. This view is supported by Cooper (2013) who states that we can admire individuals, objects or situations to which a relation can be formed and where appeals to personal goals, interests and priorities are formed.

9.16.   Workshop limitations

Question 16 asks whether respondents thought that there were any limitations to the workshop which could have been avoided.

Figure 9.16 reveals that the majority (80%) of respondents indicated that there were not, while 20% thought a date for a follow-up session should have been given.
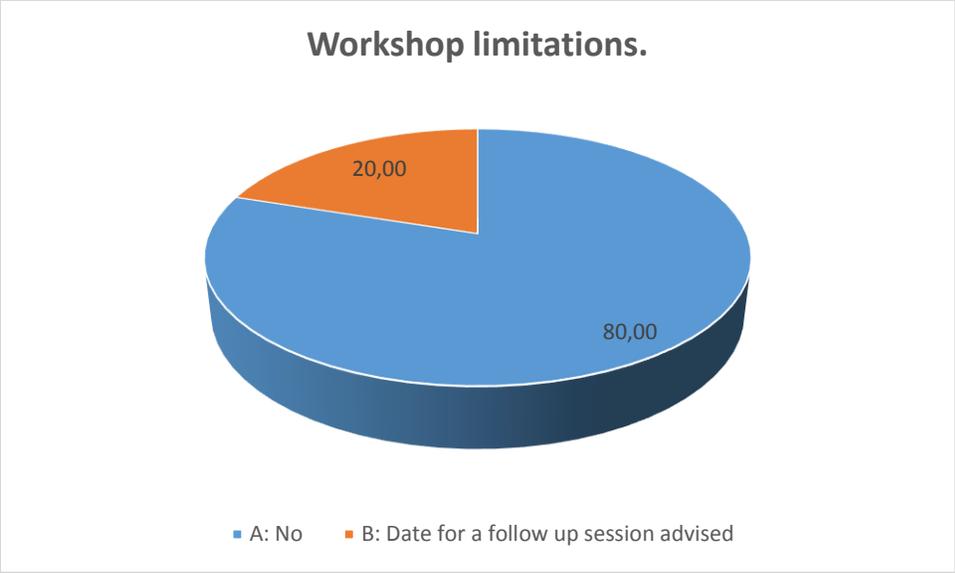
Figure 9.16: Workshop limitations.

Figure 9.16 could be revealing that 20% of the respondents would like a follow-up session for the opportunity to validate and practise their new skills. This falls in line with the view of Jobs (2013) who states that individuals do not trust themselves to make their own judgements about their level of understanding and therefore require validation.

9.17. Workshop Questions

Question 17 asks respondents if the facilitator was able to answer any workshop questions that were being asked.

Figure 9.17 reveals that most respondents (93.33%) indicated yes, 6.67% indicated 'partially' while no respondents said no.
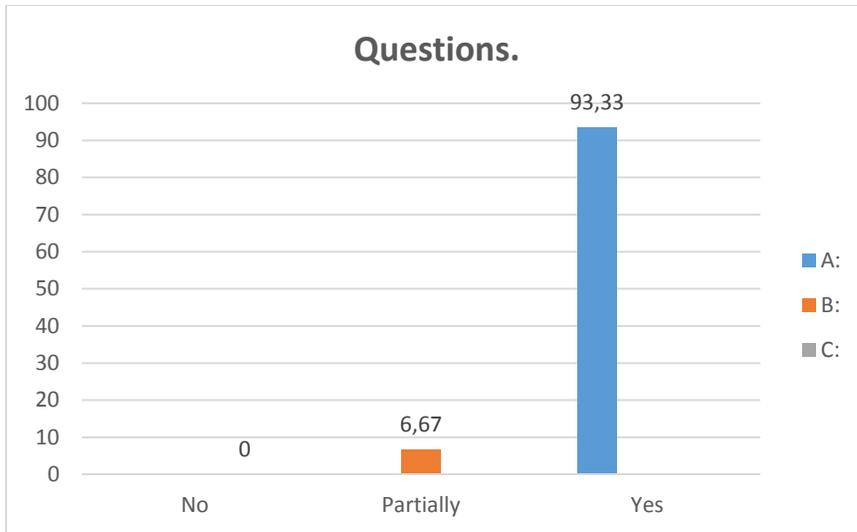
Figure 9.17: Workshop questions.

Figure 9.17 reveals that the facilitator was able to answer most of the questions asked by the respondents, implying that sufficient research was done prior to the training. This view supports that of Vosloo (2014) who states that without preparation and practise there cannot be knowledge.

9.18. Future student engagement

Question 18 asks respondents in what way, will gaining knowledge of the online learning platform improve future engagement with students?

Figure 9.18 depicts that most respondents (33.33%) indicated that students prefer an online learning space, some (26.67%) indicated that the platform allowed lecturers more time to assist with questions, 13.33% indicated that the workshop gave them confidence to answer platform queries and allowed for an opportunity to reach the silent student, and 6.67% indicated that the platform allowed for one space where students could gain everything academically required.

Figure 9.18: Future student engagement representation.

The information depicted in figure 9.18 could suggest that respondents are indicating possible advantages which relate back to their own benefits. This view supports that of the Oxford University Press (2015) who states that selection of benefits are done so according to these which one can relate to and therefore reflects how it will ultimately benefit the lecturers and then the students, indirectly.

10. Anticipated contribution

The anticipated contribution, which this study aimed to create, is in the category of enhanced learning for the teaching and learning environment. Based on the research done in this study and from the results received, it is evident that implementing an online learning platform is of great

initiative by a tertiary institution due to the benefits it aims to bring about, but the approach used to inspire use of this platform is lacking. Based on the success of the intervention workshop conducted, not only was enhanced engagement and learning opportunities created but an indirect benefit for the students taught by the respondents. Therefore, should tertiary institutions decide to implement a learning application in the form of an online learning platform, emphasis needs to be placed on the approach to training the academic staff on this online learning platform. To roll out an enhanced academic initiative is inspirational, but to deny the application of skills learned is deteriorating to the academic learning process (Christie and Jurado, [s.a]). If training workshops could be implemented, similar to the intervention workshop conducted in this research study where opportunities are created for application of newly acquired skills, this can lead to a full utilization of the designed benefits intended to be brought about by the platform.

11. <u>Conclusion</u>

This quantitative research study explored how an online learning platform can academically benefit those who make use of it. It sets on a course to explain how an intervention was used to increase the usage percentage and expose possible benefits of an online learning platform. Overall, this study reveals, as previously conducted research studies also displayed, that an intervention workshop can be applied to increase the use of the online learning platform and expose the benefits thereof. Results from this research study, interpreted from statistical data generated from answers provided from a survey, adds proof that a workshop, used as an intervention, can bring about positive changes to the educational society, ultimately improving teaching and learning overall.

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13. Annexure A – Questionnaire

Dear Respondent

You have agreed to participate in the workshop on the use of Blackboard; an online tool aimed at enhancing student's learning experience through online engagement. The reason this survey is being conducted is to determine in what way this workshop on Blackboard that you attended,

empowered you to improve your use of the online tool towards creating a more interactive learning environment for your students.

Note that participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any point. Your feedback will be anonymous and confidentiality is ensured. You can obtain feedback on the findings by contacting the researcher. The findings will be used for the purposes of completing the qualification the researcher is enrolled for.

Estimated completion time: **10 Minutes**

Please answer all the questions.

Question 1: What percentage would you rate your use of the online learning tool, before taking part in the workshop? Please select the most relevant percentage ratio.

- [ ] 0 – 10%

- [ ] 20 – 40%

- [ ] 50 – 70%

- [ ] 80 – 100%

Question 2: Was this workshop able to show you some features that you did not know were available on this online learning platform?

- [ ] Yes   [ ] No

Question 3: If you answered 'yes' to question 2, please describe some of the features you learned about in this workshop? Possible features:

_____

_____

_____

Question 4: Should you hear of a colleague struggling with this online learning platform, would you recommend that your colleague attend a similar workshop?

☐   Yes   ☐   No

Question 5: Please provide a reason for your answer to question 4. Reason:

_____

_____

_____

Question 6: Do you think your increased use of the features of this online platform will benefit your students, in terms of the overall teaching and learning taking place in your class?

☐   Yes   ☐   Partially   ☐   No

Question 7: Please provide a reason for your answer to question 6.

_____

_____

_____

Question 8: Did the workshop allow for sufficient interaction with the online learning platform, allowing you to experience the functions of the platform that are available? Tick the relevant box.

☐   Yes   ☐   No

Question 9: Was the workshop presented in such a way that it allowed you to easily follow the instructions, to be able to engage interactively with the functions of the online learning platform? Tick the most appropriate box.

☐   Yes.   ☐   More or less   ☐   not really   ☐   No

Question 10: If the institution gave you the option of returning to a curriculum without the online learning tool, would you choose to follow that curriculum? Select the option most applicable to your view.

☐ Definitely, things are simpler without the complications of the online learning platform.

☐ No, even if I am not quite familiar with it yet I can see that it will be something I can learn to incorporate.

☐ No way! The online learning platform can really assist me with teaching and learning.

Question 11: After the workshop, how would you describe the online learning platform? Select the option most applicable to your view.

☐ I can see the usefulness of the online learning platform and how it can be of use to me as an educator in my curriculum.

☐ I do see the advantages of the online learning platform but still would prefer to continue with a curriculum without the online learning platform.

☐ I cannot see the benefit of the online learning platform at all and this will not make an improvement to my curriculum what so ever.

Question 12: Was the training material provided during the workshop easy to follow and helpful? Select the most relevant option.

☐ Yes   ☐ Partially   ☐ No

Question 13: Do you think the training material provided would be something you would like to keep as a reference to consult in future? Tick the relevant box.

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Question 14: How would you suggest that the training material be improved?

_____

_____

Question 15: Overall, would you describe the workshop which took place as successfully providing you with information on the benefits of the online learning platform and how it can be of use to the overall teaching and learning process? Select the most relevant option.

☐ Yes ☐ Partially ☐ No

Question 16: Were there any limitations to the workshop which you feel could have been avoided? Please indicate these in the space provided below.

_____

_____

Question 17: Was the facilitator able to answer any questions that were being asked during the workshop? Select the most relevant option.

☐ Yes ☐ Partially ☐ No

Question 18: In what way, will gaining knowledge of the online learning platform improve your future engagement with students? Explain your answer

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.